

Underground Lab Proposal Surfaces

UW proposing major research facility for upper Icicle Creek

by Mark Lawler

ALPS and other conservation groups have only recently learned of a proposal to build a new National Laboratory deep in the heart of the Alpine Lakes Area near Leavenworth. A favored site is Cashmere Mountain, located a little over halfway up the Icicle Creek Road.

A team from the University of Washington physics department is proposing the project, which could garner the support of the National Science Foundation. While the point of the laboratory is to conduct research underground, there are many aspects of its construction and operation that are causes for concern. The Cashmere Mountain proposal would build a major industrial and office facility in the middle of a spectacular, largely undeveloped canyon known and visited by thousands of recreationists from across Washington state and the nation. Hikers, backpackers, rock climbers, horse riders, campers, anglers, hunters, picnickers, nature photographers, wildlife enthusiasts, mountain bikers, mushroom hunters, and native plant enthusiasts all use



GLORIA LINDSTROM

Cashmere Mountain from Windy Pass

the Icicle Canyon and its surrounding wild country, trails, and campgrounds.

The plan as it is developing requires:

- o A tunnel system that is about 2.5 miles long that includes a laboratory within. The single portal of the tunnel would be located near Icicle Creek in Section 13 (T24N-R13E). The tunnel would extend into (underneath) the Alpine Lakes Wilderness by about 0.25 miles.

- o No above-ground space for offices, meeting rooms, cafeterias, and maintenance facilities is planned..
- o The employment at the laboratory within the tunnel

Continued on page 2...

Also in this issue:

Land Acquisition p. 3
Forest Planning p. 5
Wild Sky; Apex Mine . . . p. 6
Public Involvement p. 7
ALPS Appeals Thinning p. 8
More News and Notes . . p. 9

Cashmere Lab (continued)

would vary from 5 to 80 people depending on the test schedule. Access via the Icicle Creek Road would be provided by a shuttle bus, possibly electric.

o An office facility would be located in Leavenworth that would house 100 permanent and 100 transitory employees. Data communication between the laboratory in the tunnel and the Leavenworth office facility would be by fiber optic cable

o Power requirement for the Laboratory was estimated to be about 12 KVA. The power line routing

would be along the right-of-way of the existing Icicle road.

Other considerations for the Icicle/Cashmere site include:

o Most of the area south of Icicle Creek is now roadless and has virgin old growth forests.

o The implications of boring a tunnel under the Alpine Lakes Wilderness are not understood.

Ventilation and air conditioning equipment, with huge blowers, would be required to keep the large underground facility properly ventilated. No ventilation shafts are planned between the tunnel and surface except for the tunnel portal.

o Construction of the underground facility, requiring about 3 years, would be a huge mining operation, requiring storage and disposal of waste rock, drilling fluids, and substantial electrical lines and/or diesel fuel storage to power boring equipment. The

tunnel alone, if it were 2.5 miles (4 km) long [2] and 30 ft in diameter (10 m), would require the excavation of over 340,000 cubic yards of rock (260,000 cubic meters). The 190,000 square feet of interior space to be created, if it has a ceiling height of 30 ft, would require the excavation of another 210,000 cubic yards (200,000 cubic meters).

o A typical gravel truck hauls 9 cubic yards (8 cubic meters), so to haul all the rock away would require something like 60,000 truckloads hauled down the Icicle Creek Road. The road would likely need to be widened and sub-

before any final decisions can be made. The location of this coring has not as yet been defined.

o The laboratory will be a clean room facility where hazardous materials are not expected to be present.

o Such a facility may not be allowed by current National Forest land management plans. Permanent removal of tree cover would be required to build the facility, to widen the Icicle Creek Road, and possibly to construct bridges. A full NEPA process will be required to fully develop an understanding of the impacts.

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stantially improved to handle this level of traffic and to provide eventual year-round access for employees and maintenance crews.

o A water right would be required for the facility to function. A draw from Icicle Creek could impact its native runs of salmon and steelhead. This water requirement is estimated to be 1000 to 2000 gallons per day.

o The Icicle River canyon is steep, rugged, and difficult to defend against forest fires. Wildfires could devastate facilities and make the site inaccessible.

Likewise, there is potential for avalanche, rock slides, and other natural disasters that could isolate the facility or render it unusable.

o A coring activity to the depth of 7000 feet will be required to validate the laboratory site

Government agencies considering the proposal are required to fully assess all viable alternatives, including other sites and No Action. Given the potential importance of the project and its impacts both on local economies and ecologies, it is essential that the proponents involve area stakeholders early and often. With its 35+ years of involvement in this corner of the Alpine Lakes region, ALPS will be watching this project closely.

[1] National Underground Science and Engineering Laboratory at Homestake (NUSEL), Reference Design Project Book (http://int.phys.washington.edu/NUSEL/reference_book.html)

[2] <http://int.phys.washington.edu/NUSEL/taup.pdf>

Congress Appropriates \$5 Million for Option Lands

THE CASCADES CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP BEGINS WINDING DOWN

by Jim Chapman

On October 28, the House-Senate Conference Committee for Interior Appropriations accepted the full \$5 million in the Senate version of the FY2004 appropriations bill to buy I-90 "Option Lands".

This was an amazing accomplishment, considering that the House followed the administration's lead and had absolutely nothing for the Alpine Lakes in its own version. Many thanks must go to several members of the Washington state delegation. **Senator Patty Murray** was able to get the \$5 million in the Senate bill in the first place, while **Representatives Norm Dicks and George Nethercutt** did their parts as Conference Committee members. Dicks has long been a champion for wildlife and recreation lands, including those targeted by The Partnership. Nethercutt's supporting letter to the ultra-conservative House subcommittee chairman was crucial. **Representative Jennifer Dunn** also worked hard in her attempt to secure funds this year for the Carbon River near Mt. Rainier.

This money will most likely buy the Paris Creek and Thorp Creek parcels to the north of I-90, plus Frost Creek and Lodgepole Creek to the south, a total of 2,677 acres. That would leave just four Option Land parcels for FY2005 – Salmon la Sac Creek, Little Salmon la Sac Creek,

Branch Creek, and Section 33 near Thorp Mountain, worth a total of \$3.5 million.

These so-called "Option Lands" were among 21 parcels for which the Forest Service had options to buy from Plum Creek Timber Company as part of the 1999 I-90 Land Exchange. Thirteen parcels were picked up earlier with monies Congress appropriated from the Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

As of this writing, the bill still has to be passed by both houses and signed into law by President Bush, but that should just be a formality.

Another Pacific Crest Trail Parcel Purchased

Although Congress has appropriated money to buy PCT lands the last several years, it failed to do so this year. However, the Forest Service was also able to pull together enough leftover funds from previous LWCF appropriations to buy the Stirrup Lake parcel along the Pacific Crest Trail for \$184,448. The purchase was announced September 18. This is the ninth PCT parcel acquired this year.

Continued on page 4...



Melakwa Lake

NATALIE WILLIAMS

Continued from page 3 ...

Forest Legacy Gets \$1.5 Million

In addition to the \$5 million LWCF money, the conference committee appropriated \$1.5 million for Forest Legacy, which buys development rights on lands that would stay with the current owners. This money will protect over 600 acres around Lake Easton and around Swamp Lake, just north of the Stampede Pass Interchange. The Partnership is working closely with the current landowners to find a buyer for the Swamp Lake land at an easement-adjusted price.

More HCP Money

On July 14, the Interior Department announced its approval of The Partnership's second Habitat Conservation Program grant application for the Yakima River wildlife corridor. Prime candidates for the \$1,849,720 grant will be 720 acres owned by US Timberlands and 200 acres that an individual owns.

For each purchase to go through, however, nonfederal groups or agencies must buy other land in the same area worth at least one-third the value of the government-purchased land. The Partnership is working with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and others to secure at least \$616,000.

Tieton Gets Both Federal and State Monies

Both federal and state money will be set aside to purchase critical Plum Creek parcels around the Tieton River northwest of Yakima. The Nature Conservancy is heading this effort, which contains lands on The Partnership's target list. The congressional conference committee has appropriated

\$1.075 million for 1,280 acres along the Tieton itself, while the Washington State Legislature appropriated \$2.549 million for the state's Wildlife and Recreation Program to buy another 1,280 acres along nearby Oak Creek. Both the **Yakima County Commissioners** and **Rep. Doc Hastings** support this purchase.

Partnership Buys Windy Pass

Windy Pass lies just northeast of Mt. Clifty on Manastash Ridge and separates the Little Creek drainage from the North Fork Taneum. Just before The Partnership's big June 30 celebration, an anonymous donor gave \$150,000 which enabled The Partnership to buy this parcel from Plum Creek for \$298,000 and donate it to the Forest Service. Windy Pass connects two other recently purchased parcels - North Ridge and North Fork Taneum - so that the three form a stair-step pattern on the map.

Sawmill Creek

The next target is the 302-acre northern-most parcel along the east side of Sawmill Creek, just east of Kelly Butte. It has the most valuable trees and is the most threatened. Plum Creek plans to build a road from the east into the middle parcel, and then up through the north parcel. Purchasing the north parcel before the end of 2003 is crucial. If that can be done, Plum Creek would have a much lower incentive to build the road since there wouldn't be nearly as many trees to cut. Otherwise, all three parcels would be subject to heavy logging.

About \$300,000 still needs to be raised by the end of the year. Major efforts are being made in

the Tacoma area, since that is in Tacoma's watershed, and they are bearing fruit.

Private Fundraising Efforts Winding Down

On June 30, The Partnership completed most of its private fundraising activities and celebrated with a big bash at the Seattle Center. This was followed by an August 25 eastside celebration at the Hidden Valley Ranch near Cle Elum.

While reducing both its staff and the sheer volume of its outreach, The Partnership will continue its efforts to secure public money for high priority target lands, including the Option Lands, through 2004. It is also still doing selective private fundraising, such as the effort in Tacoma for Sawmill Creek. One major event will be an auction at glass artist Dale Chihuly's Boathouse on December 6.

When the Partnership campaign ends a year from now, efforts to acquire remaining target lands will again be the responsibility of The Partnership's individual organizations such as ALPS.

Please Help

You can still help by giving money yourself to help The Partnership lobby and buy more land. Contact The Partnership at 206-675-9747 or www.cascadespartners.org. See if your employer will match your gift. (If you're a Boeing employee or retiree, send your gift to the Cascade Land Conservancy (www.cascadeland.org, 206-292-5907) and designate it for The Cascades Conservation Partnership.) ■

Forest Plans to be Revised - Get Involved!

by Don Parks

The Forest Service has begun to hold public meetings to discuss options for revising the existing forest management plans for the Wenatchee, Okanogan and Colville National Forests. The agency will be making crucial decisions that affect roadless areas, old growth forests, salmon habitat, trails, recreation, fire management, and a host of other important issues. Motorized users are expected to be active and organized in their responses; let's all make sure that hikers, horsemen, and other traditional conservationists rise to do their part.

The Alpine Lakes Management Plan was originally completed in 1981 and was incorporated into the forest plans of 1990. With the passage of time, these plans now need to be heavily revised to include newer information and to respond to changes in public attitudes and economic conditions. The revised plans will guide forest management for the next 15+ years. The Forest Service is just beginning the revision process, but our involvement at this early stage will help to set the major topics it will study and focus these revisions upon. The agency wants to change the existing plans only where they deem change to be necessary. Consequently, we need to convince the planning team that major changes or new information have arisen since the 1980s that require key parts of the current plans to be rewritten.

The plan update process is starting now with a 'scoping process' where the Forest Service is asking the public to tell them what issues it wants them to consider. It is asking the public to provide inputs by December 31, 2003.

There are three things you can do to get involved in this process.

- First, ask to be added to the mailing list. Contact Margaret Hartzell, Planning Team Leader (509-826-3275). E-mail: r6_ewzplanrevision@fs.fed.us or Website: www.fs.fed.us/r6/colville/cow Mailing address: Forest Plan Revision Team for the Colville, Okanogan, and Wenatchee National Forests, Okanogan Valley Office, 1240 Second Avenue South, Okanogan, WA 98840

- Second, send a letter or note to Margaret Hartzell asking that the updated plans protect old growth, re-inventory and protect roadless areas, recommend a maximum Wilderness package, consider the size of the road system needed, protect the trail system, evaluate and limit the destructive impact of motorized recreation, continue private land acquisition, fully protect threatened and endangered wildlife and fish, develop recommendations for Wild and Scenic Rivers, and any other items you think important.

- Third, attend Forest Service forest plan update meetings in November and December. See the website above for date, time, and place.



KEVIN GERAGHTY

Winter scene above Lennox Creek

Wild Sky Wilderness: A Step Closer

by *Charlie Raines and Don Parks*

On November 25 the full Senate passed the bill to establish 106,000 acres of wilderness in the Skykomish valley. It had passed the House and Senate committees last year but was waiting for action when Congress adjourned. **Senator Patty Murray** and **Congressman Rick Larsen** introduced the bill again in February. The proposed wilderness is in Rep. Larsen's district. **Sen. Maria Cantwell** cosponsored the Senate bill (S391) and **Rep. Brian Baird, Norm Dicks, Jennifer Dunn, Jay Inslee, Jim McDermott, and Adam Smith** co-sponsored the House bill (HR822). Key elements of the addition are the low elevation forests and habitat for salmon along the North Fork Skykomish River. Also included are peaks such as Ragged Ridge and Mt. Baring and lakes such as Eagle and Jakes. Several trails thread the area. There is substantial local support, including the Mayor of Index. Resolutions of support have been passed by the city councils of Monroe and Snohomish. Senator Murray deserves great credit for bringing the bill through the committee process and to the floor, working hard with colleagues in House and Senate to see this bill through.

The House committee chair has not yet scheduled hearings. **Please contact Rep. Jennifer Dunn** (202-225-7761) and ask her to work with the House Republican leadership to schedule hearings for the Wild Sky bill. ■

Apex and Damon Mine

by *Mike Town*

Most people would agree that gold mining in the watershed of the city of Seattle would be a bad idea. However, there is a proposal which would do just that. Last spring the owners of two old gold mines initiated a proposal with the Forest Service which, if approved, would reopen these mines and bring with them a host of environmental problems. For numerous reasons the ALPS board is opposing this proposal.

The two mines, known as Apex and Damon, are located just outside the Alpine Lakes Wilderness in an area south of Highway 2 near the town of Grotto. Both mines are accessible via the Money Creek Road near little Elizabeth Lake.

There are many reasons why these mines should never reopen, several related to water quality. First, according to the State of Washington, outflow from the portal of the Apex mine contains 1000 parts per billion of arsenic, which is 100 times the allowable limit for drinking water. Second, lead and zinc levels also exceed standards. Third, the water from the mine drains into a major trib-

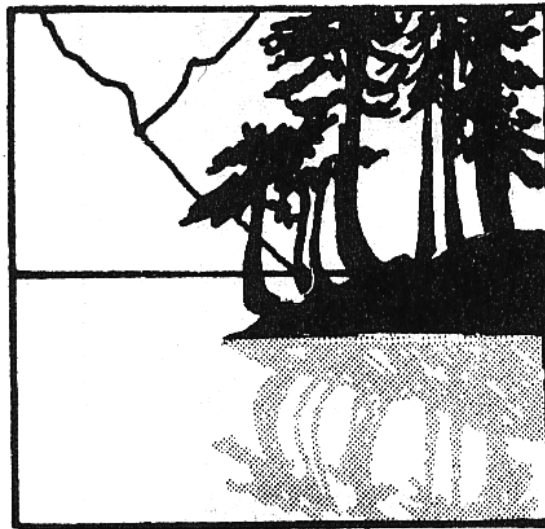
utary of the Skykomish River. Meanwhile, the outflow from the Damon mine, with very similar geology, drains into a tributary of the Tolt Reservoir. The Tolt contributes one-third of Seattle's drinking water and much of Redmond's supply.

Ore from the mines would be chemically treated at a mill site located near the confluence of the Lowe Creek and the Skykomish

River. Ore waste and tailings containing heavy metals would be used as road material next to Money Creek. Helicopters would be used for some of the ore transport and the recreational value of Lake

Elizabeth would be severely impacted, as it lies very close to the Damon portal.

The gold reservoirs in the mine are highly questionable, and at the current price of gold it is doubtful the mining would be profitable. However, despite the environmental and economic problems the Forest Service is continuing the application process. ALPS and many other environmental groups have asked the Forest Service for a full environmental assessment. Stay tuned for more information. ■



Public Involvement in the Middle Fork ATM and the Cle Elum Wilderness Study Additions

In 2002 and 2003 the Cle Elum Ranger District of the Wenatchee National Forest developed a Wilderness Recommendation for about 16,000 acres of public land adjacent to the southeast side of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness in ten parcels stretching from Lake Ann in Fortune Creek east to Snoqualmie Pass. When the public involvement phase closed in February 2003, the Forest Service had received an 'overwhelming' pro-Wilderness response. About 9,000 inputs favored Wilderness additions while 2,000 were opposed to Wilderness additions. The Forest Service must now develop a final

recommendation for action by the Congress. There is no schedule for this action.

In September 2003, after a ten-year effort, the Forest Service completed the Access and Travel Management Plan (ATM) for the Middle Fork Snoqualmie drainage of the Snoqualmie (used to be the North Bend Ranger District) Ranger District of the Mt Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. A key element of the plan is the closure of the upper Middle Fork Road (#56) to motorized vehicles at the Dingford Creek Trailhead and conversion of the last 7.6 miles of road to a trail for use by hikers, stock and mountain bikers.

The public involvement phase closed in June 2002, with inputs strongly favoring the proposed action. Over 1100 inputs were received and 78% of these favored the preferred alternative (Alt E). The Forest Service estimated that about 85% of those who responded would be supportive of the final decision. ALPS is supportive of the ATM decision. Now it is up to the Forest Service to implement the plan and work thru any other administrative issues.

ALPS would like to thank everyone who participated in the public involvement phase of these two important land use studies in the Alpine Lakes area. ■

DNR to Hold Public Forums on W.Wash. Harvest Levels

You also have an opportunity to speak out on the course of timber harvest from state lands. The Board of Natural Resources released a report on a range of alternatives on November 10 and is set to decide among them in February. Six public meetings will be held in Western Washington from December 2 - 11. A schedule can be found at www.dnr.wa.gov.

The options being considered range from annual harvests of 396 million to 819 million board feet per year. The Board's report claims that none of them will have a significant environmental impact. That claim in itself is a good reason to get involved!



NATALIE WILLIAMS

Melakwa Lake's West Side

ALPS Appeals Sky Forks Timber Sale

by Rick McGuire

The Sky Forks timber sale, in the Skykomish District of the Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest, has been appealed by ALPS in conjunction with the North Cascade Conservation Council, Pilchuck Audubon Society, and the Cascade Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Conservationists opposed this sale from the time of its initial proposal in 1996. The sale would cut 6 million board feet of naturally regenerated, mature second-growth forest in the valley of Salmon Creek (a tributary of the North Fork Skykomish), along Barclay Creek, and on benchlands north of the town of Skykomish. It has been touted as "accelerating" the development of old-growth forest through road building and logging - an unsubstantiated proposition, and clearly unnecessary. Several miles of substandard "temporary" roads would be built as part of the sale, endangering salmon spawning grounds in aptly-named Salmon Creek. Logging would be carried out in sensitive riparian areas.

Conservationists have put together a strong case against the sale, assisted by attorney Susan Jane Brown, an experienced veteran of timber sale litigation. ALPS and the other groups will be meeting to discuss concerns and possible resolutions with the Forest Service. Further court action may follow.

Meanwhile, north of the Alpine Lakes region, the Forest Service is trying to get a second

big Mount Baker-Snoqualmie timber sale out the door, the 10-mmbf "Forgotten Thin Plus". The volume in this one sale is greater than the total amount sold from the Forest over the previous five years. If both sales go through

this year as the Forest Service intends, logging on our west-side National Forest will reach levels not seen since the days of the notorious Section 318 salvage rider. ■



KEVIN GERAGHTY

A Westside thinning candidate - Forgotten Thin Plus unit

Teaway Forests and Owls Crashing

As it has turned out, the year 1999 was important to the Alpine Lakes for more than the I-90 Land Exchange Act. In that year, Boise Cascade sold its Teaway holdings to US Timber, which since then has taken owl management (and populations) to new lows.

The deal provided Boise with \$55M and UST with over 47,000 acres of forestland. Already, they have "harvested" roughly 18,000 acres of that - a breathtaking pace. Unless one is harvesting vegetables, this is not stewardship.

Within their holdings were at

least twenty established owl nesting sites, protected from heavy logging within 1.8-mile radius circles. But with Teaway populations down about 60% in the past decade UST is taking advantage of State policies that allow an owner to "decertify" a circle if it is unused for three years. Is this in effect just a backdoor strategy to get rid of an inconvenient species?

Peter Goldman and the Washington Forest Law Center have filed notice of intent to sue the state for failing to uphold the Endangered Species Act.

Alpine Lakes News and Notes

Healthy Forest Initiative

The Healthy Forests and Restoration Act of 2003, HR 1094 has been passed by the Senate. This is a very bad piece of legislation that could adversely impact the Alpine Lakes area. This bill: (1) does not protect currently healthy mature and old growth forests and roadless areas; (2) reduces citizen access to decisions that affect their public lands; (3) weakens the National Environmental Policy Act; (4) interferes with the independence of the federal judiciary; and (5) does not ensure increased protection for communities from wild-fire. We will keep you informed as we learn more about this legislation.

ALPS Alpine Lakes Map Selling Well

The third edition of the ALPS Alpine Lakes Wilderness map has now been in the stores for several months and is selling well. The ALPS Board of Trustees has voted to include a free copy with each membership renewal this year. Should you not receive yours by the end of the year, call Rick McGuire at 206 363 6954. The map has received many favorable reviews, and is on sale at REI, Metsker's Maps, Forest Service offices and other outlets.

Pratt Connector Trail EA Pending

ALPS and other conservation groups are awaiting the release of the Environmental Assessment for the Pratt River Connector trail along the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River between Taylor River and the Pratt River. This destructive Forest Service project would put a new trail into sensitive, low elevation, trailless "core security" wildlife habitat. It would be in direct contravention of regulations implementing the Endangered Species Act. It would also be a waste of precious trailbuilding dollars which could be much better spent in other, much more attractive places in the Middle Fork valley. ALPS is opposed to the construction of this unnecessary trail.

Middle Fork Snoqualmie ATM Decision Issued

The long-awaited Decision Notice for the Middle Fork Snoqualmie Access and Travel Management Plan has been issued. This is a very good move by the Forest Service, and an important milestone in the 13-year campaign by ALPS and other conservation organizations to "take back" the Middle Fork valley. The plan will remove 59 problem "dispersed recreation" sites where four-wheel-drive trucks have been used to push unofficial campsites into sensitive riverside areas. The decision will

close the Middle Fork road above Dingford Creek, turning a rough and miserable road into a pleasant riverside trail. It will also put in place a seasonal closure (November to April) of the Middle Fork road between Taylor River and Dingford Creek. The Middle Fork Snoqualmie trail #1003 on the south side of the river between Taylor R. and Hardscrabble Cr. will be opened to mountain bikes every other day for a three-year trial period.

Miners will be allowed motorized access only by a special-use permit. Some miners have expressed opposition to the plan, and want the public to pay for road maintenance. ALPS will be watching this situation with great care.

The Forest Service is also planning to build a new campground near the Taylor River. ALPS played a key role in securing funding for this campground and is lobbying the Forest Service to locate as much of it as possible in young forest, to head off the sort of problems that have occurred at Kachess Campground. To view the Forest Service Middle Fork ATM decision document online, look at: www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs/projects/mf_atm

In a related project, the Federal Highway Administration is proposing to pave 8.5 miles of the Middle Fork road, from Valley Camp to the Taylor River area. To get involved, contact Matthew Joerin at the FHA, mfsnoqualmie@fhwa.dot.gov



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The newsletter of the
Alpine Lakes Protection
Society (ALPS). ALPS is
dedicated to protection of
the Alpine Lakes area in
Washington's Cascades.
Editors: Art Day, Natalie
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ART DAY

Escondido Ridge, nine years after the fire - a healthy forest