

Wild Sky Wilderness Legislation — Heading into the Home Stretch

by Art Day

After years of frustration over the inactions of a certain former California politician and committee chairman, the legislative logjam that was the House Natural Resources Committee broke free on March 7 with the passage

of the Wild Sky Wilderness Act (H.R. 886). The celebrations began immediately for ALPS and other conservation groups as 2007 becomes the “Year of the Wild Sky.”

The bill, introduced by U.S. Rep. Rick Larsen, D-Lake Stevens, would designate 106,577 acres in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest as wilderness. It has been over 20 years since the passage of a Wilderness bill for Washington State. “Wild Sky will protect more low-elevation acres than any other wilderness area in the state, bringing wilderness closer to our communities and benefiting Washington families and businesses for generations to come,” Larsen said.



Mike Town on West Cady Ridge, part of the proposed Wild Sky.

HARRY ROMBERG

At the present time, the bill is awaiting action on the Senate Floor. As of late June, all wilderness legislation in the Senate is under a “hold” courtesy of Senator Coburn from Oklahoma. While there is no firm schedule for Wild Sky Passage, it should move

later this summer. The President is expected to sign the bill.

Congressionally speaking, subsequent progress has been rapid as the full House passed the bill on April 17. The Senate Natural Resources Committee then passed companion bill S. 520, sponsored by Senator Patty Murray, on May 23. In fact Senator Murray had led the bill through full Senate passage three times in recent years.

ALPS Trustee Mike Town, who has also worked tirelessly through Friends of the Wild Sky, had this to say: “This legislation will secure important natural features in the upper Skykomish Valley for our future. We all hope the Senate will complete its work quickly so the President can sign this bill. We are proud to have been able to participate in the campaign to protect this incredible area.”

Also in this issue:

Preliminary USFS Proposals for Trails Serving ORVs	2
ALPS Opposes Easing Regulations for Using Fish Poison.....	3
Trails Fest, July 21	3
ALPS Requests LWCF Money for Mahoney Creek.....	4
Trustees Election Ballot	5
South Fork Tolt Land Exchange Possible	7
Holly Infestation Threatens Mt. Si.....	7

Preliminary USFS Proposals for Trails Serving ORVs

by *Charlie Raymond*

The Wenatchee National Forest (WNF) is preparing to release initial proposals for designated motorized trails and new management of off-road vehicles (ORVs). This will initiate a critical time for public input to shape the final proposed actions for formal environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which will start in 2008.

The foundation for the new policy is the national "Travel Management Rule" (<http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/ohv/>) announced on 2 November, 2005. The main feature is that by 2009 each ranger district will publish a map showing those routes open to various types of motor vehicles. Thereafter, use of motor vehicles off of designated routes will be illegal, which will also be the case for cross-country driving of any vehicles including ORVs.

Starting in May of 2006, the WNF requested input from ORV users about what trails they would like to see on the published maps defining the motorized system. The Wenatchee and Okanogan National Forests together received about 500 comments by the September 1 deadline. These comments were distributed to relevant ranger districts for analysis by interdisciplinary (ID) teams spanning a range of expertise to consider resource protection, recreation balance, safety, maintenance costs, and other issues. The present plan is to unveil proposals from each district at public meetings starting in July of this year. The time and location of meetings will be announced on the web (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/oka/recreation/ohv-2006/ohv-rule-new-rec>) and by mail and email. You can ask the WNF to put you on the contact list by calling 509-

664-9200 to be on the contact list. Comments about the proposals will be accepted from the public until November, 2007.

In the area closely surrounding the Alpine Lakes, ORV use is focused in the Cle Elum Ranger District of the WNF. ALPS is placing corresponding emphasis on developments in this district. In response to the Forest Service request for input, ALPS submitted general concerns about effectively managing ORVs and made extensive detailed comments on specific trail issues. Subsequently, we have learned more about the sort of things the ORV users have been asking for.

There is some good news for the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area (ALWA) and its surroundings. Our present information is that there are no requests for adding any trails for motorized use north of I-90 in the Teanaway, Cle Elum and Yakima River drainages. While that is good to hear, there are nevertheless serious resource impacts and recreational user conflicts with the present trail designations. These problems are growing with increasing intensity of ORV use. The recent Forest Service management direction of rerouting and hardening trails spreads damage and is not sustainable. ALPS has made the case that these problems need to be addressed under the new ORV rule.

It is no surprise that there is also disquieting news in the input from the ORV community. They are interested in additional motorcycle trails in the Taneum and Manastash drainages and 4x4 routes in the Swauk that will need investigation. More broadly there are requests for "dual use" of many Forest Service roads. (The term dual use refers to travel of non street-legal vehicles like

dirt bikes and ATVs along with street-legal vehicles. Dual use is now allowed by state law on USFS roads as long as the Forest Service also permits it.) A few of the dual use requests involve roads to trailheads that access the ALWA. There are also requests for dual use of logging roads through areas of regenerating forest near the wilderness boundary. ALPS will oppose dual use that impinges on the ALWA or compromises non-motorized trails, as well as urge general caution in extending dual use anywhere within the USFS road system. As with motorcycles, many ATV users are interested in speed, climbing hills and generally exploring off-road or along old, closed spur roads with consequent resource disturbance. While this kind of activity will be illegal under the new ORV rule, it is clear that many ORV users are aggressive and that resources available to the Forest Service for enforcement will be limited.

The Cle Elum Ranger District hopes to release maps outlining their preliminary proposal informally during June on the "Cle Elum Trails" web site (<http://cleelumtrails.com/>). Once we have specifics about the proposal and have made needed investigations on the ground, ALPS will be adding more to our already extensive input. There will certainly be immense pressure from well-organized ORV interests. WNF has already heard from organizations and many individuals pushing for expanded ORV opportunities. Thus, it will be important for the FS to hear from individuals, who deeply care about the Alpine Lakes from a broader perspective. Tim Foss (509-852-1069) heads the Cle Elum ID team. Let Tim Foss know about your personal observations and experiences. ■

ALPS Opposes Easing Regulations for Use of Fish Poison

ALPS provided comments to federal Forest Health Protection staff earlier this year regarding proposed rules for application of fish poison in the National Forests. Specifically, the Forest Service has proposed changes to the Code of Federal Regulations that would allow states to carry out fish poison (piscicide) activities without federal environmental analysis, as published in the November 16, 2006, Federal Register, Volume 71, page 66715.

Trustee Jim Chapman wrote for ALPS to state our objections to the proposed change. ALPS believes the new rules would provide states with too much authority in determining how and when fish poison may be applied in national forest waterways, with very little oversight from Forest Service officials. Piscicide application could even involve building new roads and water barriers. This is an activity that requires careful oversight by our federal land managers. ■

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Presented by Washington Trails Association, TrailsFest is a hands-on event for all ages, providing adventurers with a fun and safe environment to explore the outdoors. This outdoor extravaganza features clinics on everything from predicting mountain weather, to hiking with kids, to ultra-light trekking. Take a guided hike, try fly-fishing, paddle a kayak or climb a rock wall. Visit the dozens of exhibitors, check out the latest outdoor fabrics and gear, and get suggestions from the experts on great places to hike.

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For more information on TrailsFest:
(206) 625-1367
trailsfest@wta.org

Alps Requests LWCF Money for Maloney Creek

by Jim Chapman

After working land acquisition efforts through the Cascade Conservation Partnership for several years, ALPS is once again going directly to Congress to request Land & Water Conservation Fund money for the Alpine Lakes area. While the Partnership's requests focused primarily on the I-90 corridor, and most of its member organizations will continue in that emphasis, ALPS will be shifting more of its attention to the US Highway 2 corridor.

Only two parcels in the Highway 2 corridor have so far been acquired by non-profit groups or strongly pushed for acquisition. In 2005, the Cascade Land Conservancy bought 200 acres of Longview Fibre land on Jumpoff Ridge, located just east of Index between the North & South Forks of the Skykomish River. It plans to donate this land to the federal government. This year, several groups are asking Congress for \$1.5 million to buy two parcels, totaling 470 acres, along the Wallace River and within the soon-to-be (we hope) Wild Sky Wilderness Area. ALPS supports this effort but will let the others lead it.

First up for ALPS is a 320-acre parcel located along Maloney Creek, just south of Skykomish. Owned by Longview Fibre, it is completely surrounded by national forest land and is highly visible from both the town and highway. It contains significant low-elevation forest, mostly naturally-regenerated mature second growth, and also some old



President Don Parks likes his trees extra-large.

The northwest corner of the parcel juts into one of the most spectacular areas of low-elevation old growth on the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie.

growth. The northwest corner of the parcel juts into one of the most spectacular areas of low-elevation old growth on the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie. With the exception of one heavily overgrown, almost invisible road, undrivable for decades, the Maloney Creek valley is wild and roadless, with extensive spotted owl and marbled murrelet habitat.

No official estimate of the land's value has been made but ALPS is asking for \$2.0 million just to be safe.

ALPS has sent its request to Congressman Norm Dicks (now the chair of the House Appropriations Committee for Interior, Environment & Related Agencies); Congressman Rick Larsen, whose district contains Maloney Creek; and to Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell.

Maloney Creek is just the first of several Skykomish Valley parcels ALPS will work to have acquired. A complete list for future efforts is still being developed.

As far as the I-90 corridor is concerned, most environmental groups such as the Cascade Land Conservancy are prioritizing a section in the Big Creek drainage on Manastash Ridge. Also, the new Congress came through to pass an Interior appropriations act for FY2007. It included \$975,000 for Stampede Pass on the Pacific Crest Trail. ALPS supports these acquisitions but is placing its emphasis on Maloney Creek. ■

Trustees Election Ballot

The terms of three ALPS Trustees expire this year, so we are conducting an election for the 2007-2010 term.

Trustees Mike Pierson and Natalie Williams are running for re-election.

Trustee Mike Town has chosen not to run again. A Duvall resident and winner of many awards for his teaching of High School AP Environmental Science, he has been a trustee for the past four years. His main efforts were focused on the Wild Sky Wilderness campaign. We thank Mike for his contributions to ALPS.

Karyl Winn has agreed to run for Mike Town's position.

There is one more Trustee position open. If you want to suggest someone to fill it, write that person's name in the space provided and the Board of Trustees will consider it.

If you yourself are interested or would like to attend one of our meetings, please contact Don at 425-883-0646 or dlparks@verizon.net.

Here are brief biographies of the candidates.

MIKE PIERSON, Seattle, is a principal at the law firm of Riddell Williams with a primarily litigation practice. A trustee since 1998, he first became involved with ALPS over Plum Creek's attempts to access Scatter Creek. He has since done *pro bono* work for ALPS in several other cases, most recently in connection with a proposed development on Easton Ridge.

NATALIE K. WILLIAMS, Seattle, is a Boeing System Engineer, and has been a trustee since 1995. She is in charge of

membership and monitors Forest Practice Applications to the state Department of Natural Resources. Her major interests are preserving wilderness and old growth, preserving access to the high alpine for climbing purposes, and preserving space for hiker-only trails

KARYL WINN, Seattle, is a retired archivist/librarian. In the early years of ALPS she chaired its Research/Resources Committee and attended many trustee meetings. She has hiked and climbed in most parts of the Alpine Lakes. She has also belonged to numerous environmental organizations. In her work as Manuscripts Curator at the University of Washington, she acquired papers and records of environmental leaders and organizations and supervised their preparation for research use.

Please mark the ballot below, fold it and tape it closed. Mail to the address on the backside of this sheet.

- Mike Pierson
- Natalie K. Williams
- Karyl Winn

(Suggested New Trustee)

Whitebark pine near Iron Peak.



**DON PARKS, PRESIDENT
ALPINE LAKES PROTECTION SOCIETY
P. O. BOX 27646
SEATTLE, WA 98165**

South Fork Tolt Land Exchange Possible

by Rick McGuire

The City of Seattle has expressed an interest to the Forest Service about acquiring ownership of National Forest lands in the upper part of the South Fork Tolt watershed. The Tolt supplies about one third of the water used by Seattle and neighboring cities. Some 3000 or so acres of it are part of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest (MBS), while the City owns the rest of the 13,000-acre watershed.

A land exchange with the Forest Service could provide the means to acquire a number of critical, threatened inholdings in the MBS. Funding for land acquisition has been very limited in recent years. When the City acquired ownership

of MBS lands in the Cedar River watershed, it did so by buying many inholdings and trading them to the Forest Service.

Most land exchanges in recent years have been controversial, since public lands traded to timber companies faced immediate destruction. A land exchange with the City might be different, were the City to give assurances that the lands it acquired from the Forest Service would not be logged. Seven or eight years ago, the City announced (with much fanfare) a policy of no more logging in the Cedar River watershed. However, the real policy has turned out to be “no logging, but...” The City has tried to sell timber sales that purport to help second growth forests by

thinning them, ostensibly to hasten their development into old growth. Such thinning has been discredited by the dismal results from it on National Forest lands, and ALPS has opposed such sales. But the City seems determined to go ahead with it, making a mockery of their “no more logging” policy. Some observers believe the real purpose of the logging is to justify the large number of people employed in managing the watershed.

ALPS might support a land exchange on the Tolt, but it would be much easier to do so if the City guaranteed there would be a real no logging policy, not like the “no logging, but...” policy in effect on the Cedar. ■

Holly Infestation Threatens Mt. Si

by Rick McGuire

The problem of invasive foreign species grows worse each year. They run rampant in eastern Washington rangelands and many western Washington lowland habitats, although the forests of the Cascades have mostly escaped serious damage so far. But that may now be changing. European holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) has begun appearing in some foothill forests with disturbing frequency. A particularly serious infestation has taken hold in the northwest corner of the DNR's Mt. Si Natural Resource Conservation Area, on slopes above the North Fork Snoqualmie River. Holly is widespread in second growth forest there, and is even invading old growth forest.

European holly is long-lived and extremely shade tolerant. Once established under a forest canopy, it grows slowly for years waiting for overstory trees to



Bad berries.

die or blow down. Even in its native range in Europe, it can form dark, gloomy thickets, with sharp pointed leaves forming an impenetrable barrier above a sterile forest floor, and it is considered an undesirable plant. Here it faces none of the organisms that keep it in check in its native land.

Fortunately, only female holly trees produce berries. Only one in ten wild trees is female, and sunlight is usually required for berries to form. Thus, holly

spreads relatively slowly on its own. It is believed that most of the problem on Mt. Si is due to a large, semi-abandoned holly orchard at the western base of the mountain. There, dozens of female trees produce berries by the millions. These berries are eaten by birds that then spread seeds over the nearby slopes of Si.

The DNR is aware of the problem and hopes to take some steps to combat the infestation. Small plants can be uprooted by hand, but larger ones need to be cut and the stumps treated with herbicide. Hopefully something can be done about the holly orchard at the foot of Si. Meanwhile, do your part, and pull up any hollies you can when you see them in any forest. Be careful not to confuse young holly plants with Oregon grape, which has similar sharp-pointed, glossy leaves. ■



alps

alpine lakes protection society
PO Box 27646
Seattle, WA 98165

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HARRY ROMBERG

Clear, clean water just downstream of the Wild Sky.



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Layout: Pat Hutson

For membership
information, contact

Natalie Williams
5627 47th Ave. SW
Seattle, WA 98136

dlparks@verizon.net