



Don Parks surveys the next place on his to-do list, the Pratt River valley, to be added to the Alpine Lakes Wilderness

HARRY ROMBERG

Don Parks Steps Down As ALPS President

After seven years at the helm of the ALPS ship of state, Don Parks has handed over responsibilities as ALPS president to Rick McGuire.

One would be hard pressed to find any issue affecting the Alpine Lakes region where Don is not closely involved. From land acquisitions to timber sales to roads and trails, Don is in the middle of it all. But perhaps his main interest in recent years has been establishment of new wilderness areas and expansion of existing ones, filling in the

map with dark green in places once out of reach.

A veteran of the original campaign that led to the 1976 Alpine Lakes Wilderness Act, Don has been building on that foundation ever since. He was ALPS' main campaigner for the Wild Sky Wilderness, signed into law in 2008, and has now turned his attention to expanding the Alpine Lakes Wilderness by addition of low elevation lands in the South and Middle Fork Snoqualmie and Pratt River valleys.

Luckily, Don is not going away and fully intends to remain very active with ALPS and the Sierra Club. ■

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Time Runs Out for Wilderness Bill

Despite a valiant last-minute effort by Senator Patty Murray, the Alpine Lakes Wilderness additions bill was unable to make it under the wire in the closing days of the 111th Congress. The bill had passed the House earlier in the Congress, but was unable to clear the Senate. Its main sponsors, Eighth District Congressman Dave Reichert and Senator Patty Murray, have indicated their intent to make another run at it and to reintroduce bills in the 112th Congress.

The bill would add about 22,000 acres to the western side of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, including much low-elevation old growth and mature second-growth forest in the Middle Fork Snoqualmie and Pratt River valleys. It would also designate the Pratt and part of the Middle Fork under the Wild & Scenic River Act.

ALPS is of course disappointed that the measure was unable to make it all the way. But in the conservation business, patience and tenacity are not just virtues

but necessities. Wilderness is the strongest legal protection any piece of land can have. It is difficult to enact, by design. But it is just as difficult to un-enact, which is why land protection advocates consider it to be the gold standard of green.

ALPS intends to pursue enactment of the bill in the new Congress and again looks forward to working closely with the sponsors. Good things take time, and the recent Wild Sky Wilderness effort showed how persistence pays. Look for updates in future editions of *The Alpine*. ■



JOHN ROPPER

North Fork Skykomish, now mostly included in Wild Sky Wilderness.

Harlan Project Falls Short



JOHN ROPER

Looking southeast from Mt. Townsend to logged-off Harlan Ridge. Mt. Fernow is directly behind, and the snowy Chiwaukum mountains in the distance to left.

by Rick McGuire

The Skykomish district of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest recently proposed to decommission some, but not all, of the roads on Harlan Ridge. Cut clean by Weyerhaeuser before being acquired by the Forest Service, Harlan Ridge is a two-mile-square moonscape immediately adjacent to the Wild Sky Wilderness. It has begun to green up somewhat in the two decades since John Roper took the photo of it that accompanies this article. Very unfortunately, ORVs are using the Harlan road system to drive into the Wild Sky Wilderness, where they are churning huckleberry meadows into muck. Roads such as the one that appears there at midslope will be decommissioned, but the worst problem will be retained: the

ridgetop road system, climbing to nearly 5000 feet.

The Forest Service admits that ORVs are using the ridgetop road system to gain access to the Wilderness, but perversely maintains that it needs to keep the roads open so as to conduct “collaborative restoration” for the damaged meadows. No information as to what “collaborative restoration” means has been released. The Forest Service proposes to gate the road in hopes of stopping ORVs. But gates work to exclude ORVs only where patrols are frequent and where bypass routes can be quickly and effectively blocked. Neither condition applies at Harlan. A gate in such a remote spot only serves as an additional challenge, and will likely be bypassed within a few days, or hours.

So we have a strange situation where closing and thoroughly decommissioning this road system would stop ORVs from riding into the Wilderness, but the Forest Service instead proposes to keep it open so it can “restore” the damaged meadows. But the damage will never stop as long as the road remains open. The Skykomish district has long been infamous for doggedly continuing to repair pointless roads to nowhere despite decades of successive washouts. “Stormproofing” has been the preferred term for these endless repairs, though that word hasn’t been heard much lately. ALPS hopes that the Forest Service will acknowledge reality and put a stop to the ongoing destruction in the Wild Sky Wilderness by closing this road system that serves no purpose. ■

Wild Voices:

Unlawful, widespread, intentional, and habitual snowmobile use in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness



ROBERT MULLINS

Skiing in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness near snowmobile highmark tracks/Mt. Stuart, Sherpa Peak, and the Enchantments

Reprinted by permission from the February 2011 *Wilderness Watch Guardian*

*By Robert Mullins
Leavenworth, Wash.*

We parked at the Beverly Creek trailhead on the Wenatchee National Forest, and walked on skis up Earl Peak on the edge of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, a 362,789-acre preserve in Washington's Cascade Mountains. At the 7,036-foot summit, we saw spectacular views of Mt. Stuart and the aptly-named Enchantments. We were surprised by snowmobiles lapping the valleys and crossing several drainages inside the Alpine Lakes Wilderness below us.

We were further dismayed by both the Forest Service's and local sheriff's refusal to do anything to catch the trespassers even after we

reported the license plate numbers of their vehicles from the parking lot!

Sadly, I've seen illegal snowmobile use in Wilderness on many other backcountry ski trips. New, advanced technology enables snowmobiles to climb mountains they never could before! The Teanaway/Ingalls divide, open country with spectacular views, is tracked by snowmobiles regularly, and law-breakers cross the divide to enter the Wilderness. Last winter I climbed Navaho Peak with a friend and we planned to ski the northeast bowl into the Wilderness. The ridge was a packed snowmobile-highway through scores of broken high-altitude trees. From the summit we saw that snowmobiles had tracked the bowl and adjacent ridge far into the Wilderness and also descended at least 1500

vertical feet below (also into the Wilderness).

It's frustrating to see so much snowmobile trespass in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. Forest Service officials claim to take the problem seriously, but say they are unable to stop it. A local group, the Wenatchee Mountains Coalition has had enough. We have submitted a proposal to Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Supervisor, Rebecca Heath, to designate new winter non-motorized areas along the Wilderness boundary. Closing the slope south of the Wilderness boundary on the Teanaway crest, down to the North Fork Teanaway Road, would create an easily enforceable snowmobile closure boundary that would keep snowmobiles away from the Wilderness. The Forest Service could easily enforce the law within its current budget by creating this boundary, which would be a groomed road they could patrol.

The problem is well known and discussed extensively on internet forums. Reliable reports, many from USFS personnel, document trespass across the breadth of the Wilderness—from Stevens Pass to Cle Elum! Citizens must speak out, insist that the agency enforce federal law and protect the Alpine Lakes Wilderness from unlawful, widespread, intentional, and habitual snowmobile Wilderness trespass. A recent article—<http://www.justgetout.net/Wenatchee/21163> describes the efforts of the Wenatchee Mountains Coalition. For more information or to join, email: wenatcheemountainscoalition@hotmail.com.

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Wild Voices

Continued from page 4



ROBERT MULLINS

Wilderness Watch is a Missoula-based organization that works on issues affecting designated wilderness areas throughout the

country. For more information, go to <http://www.wildernesswatch.org/>

ALPS members interested in improving the opportunities for winter solitude and/or peaceful snow travel will want to make inputs to the Central Cascades Winter Recreation Council recommendation to the Wenatchee Okanogan FS on cross-country ski trail maintenance and expansions. Please visit their site (<http://www.snowrec.org/tiki-index.php>) and follow the link to 'Public input sought!' to make comments.

Thank you for helping keep our winter non-motorized forest recreation opportunities intact!

Hydro Projects Proposed for Hancock and Calligan Creeks

Snohomish P.U.D. has filed for permits to construct hydroelectric projects on Hancock and Calligan creeks, both tributaries of the North Fork Snoqualmie River north of Mt. Si, at the very western edge of the Alpine Lakes region. Although the area in question is private land and not at all pristine, ALPS and other conservationists nonetheless regard the proposals with concern.

Experience has shown that once projects like these get built in an area, the infrastructure of roads and powerlines tends to attract others. Although these two projects may not seem that harmful if considered in isolation,

many other projects have been proposed in the North Fork Snoqualmie and in every other major watershed around the Alpine Lakes. Falling water is what gives the Cascades their name, and there are those who would like to see much of that water diverted into pipes and spinning turbines. The European Alps offer a sad example of what can happen. Natural free flowing streams are a rare sight there since most of the water, in watercourses large and small, has long since been diverted for power generation. The sound of falling water, such a pervasive background in our Cascades, is hardly heard there.

Here in Washington State we have already constructed many large dams on major rivers. Small projects like Hancock and Calligan produce only tiny amounts of energy compared with big existing dams, and the vast majority of what power they do produce is generated only during high spring runoff when the need is lowest. ALPS and others believe Cascades streamwater is better left flowing over rocks than through pipes, and question whether the small incremental increase in electricity supply is worth extending generation facilities like these into undeveloped areas of the Cascades.

LWCF – The Rules Have Been Changed

By Jim Chapman

The influx of new Senators and Representatives has forced a change in how Congress operates. One of those changes is how money is to be appropriated. “Earmarks” are out. No longer will members of Congress be permitted to designate money for specific projects in their states or districts.

This includes the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which is the major source of money that Congress appropriates for the federal government to buy the private lands that ALPS and others want added to the public domain.

Up until now, we have gone directly to members of our state delegation, like Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, as well as Representative Norm Dicks and the representatives whose districts contain these parcels.

Now Congress is to simply designate these funds for the

pertinent agencies and let them decide where the money will go.

What also complicates things has been the current standoff between the Republican-controlled House and the Democrat-controlled Senate. As a result, hardly any appropriations bills were passed before Congress adjourned and the new Congress is in a “continuing resolution” mode to keep government from shutting down.

As of this writing (March 2), the House has passed a catch-all appropriations bill, HR 1, to fund all agencies through Fiscal Year 2011, which ends September 30. The Senate has placed the bill on its calendar.

Section 1752 of the bill provides \$9.1 million, in addition to at least \$3.4 million left over from previous years (total of \$12.5 million), for the Forest Service to acquire land. This covers the entire country and is much lower than what’s been

available in previous years.

Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell and Lands & Realty Director Gregory Smith will decide how much money each of the regions will get for acquisitions. In turn, Kent Connaughton, who will be the new Regional Forester, will distribute the Region 6 allocations to the national forests in Washington and Oregon.

Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie Forest Supervisor Rob Iwamoto did request money from the regional office to purchase the three Skykomish Valley parcels advocated by ALPS, Cascade Land Conservancy and others - Lake Serene Trail, Maloney Creek and Grotto – but the region turned down the request for this year.

The main reason is that several Plum Creek parcels left over from the 1999 I-90 Land Exchange have the highest priority. There has usually been just enough money to purchase one parcel each year. Most are along Manastash Ridge. The Jim Creek parcel was acquired in FY2010 with seven parcels remaining. Big Creek is next on the list. Thetis Creek, just west of Lake Kachess, is the only parcel north of I-90. Three parcels along the Pacific Crest Trail, near Pyramid Peak and Green Pass, are also on the list. If you want to see all their locations, click on:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/land/staff/LWCF/images/R6LwcfProjectNominationsFy2011/!3R6CascadeEcosystemMap.pdf>

This is bound to be a long, slow process but we’ll keep working on it, and we still want our members of Congress to stay in touch with the Forest Service. ■



Old cedars.

ART DAY

Greenway Board Adopts Boundary and Advocates Heritage Area Designation

At its quarterly meeting on February 16, the Board of Directors for the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust voted to approve an official boundary for the Greenway.

This boundary makes use of both watershed and political boundaries. It includes the Snoqualmie River and Lake Washington watersheds up to the Snohomish County line, all of the Cedar River watershed, and portions of the Yakima

River watershed including the Manastash Creek sub-watershed to the west and the Currier Creek sub-watershed to the east. It also includes all of the cities of Seattle, Shoreline, and Ellensburg.

More about the Greenway including maps of land ownerships can be found at their website, <http://mtsgreenway.org/newsandpublications/maps>.

In addition, the board voted unanimously to seek a National

Heritage Area designation for the Greenway. Such areas are created by acts of Congress and managed by the National Park Service. The next steps will be making sure the Greenway meets all the requirements for designation, and convincing Congress that its designation should be enacted into law. Greenway members and staff will be busy putting a petition together and contacting our congressional delegation. ■

Middle Fork Road Project Still A Go?

The Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) says that all systems are go to implement the Middle Fork Snoqualmie road project, which would improve and pave the lower 11 miles of the Middle Fork road. Fish passage would be added to stream crossings where there is now none, problem areas fixed, and horrible summer dust plumes curtailed. ALPS and other conservationists have secured a minimum width design standard that we hope will minimize the adverse impacts and amount of clearing required.

It should be kept in mind that FHWA has been saying the project is a go for nearly two decades now, yet it remains unbuilt. Perhaps this time is different, but with government budgets at all levels growing more precarious by the day, and maintenance levels dropping on many roads near and far, the outlook is uncertain.

ALPS has had mixed feelings about the project, having been very unhappy with the results of other FHWA projects, notably the Cle Elum River road which FHWA turned into a straight,

broad highway suitable for 70 mph travel. But the Middle Fork's proximity to Seattle and the atrocious state of the current road do argue for something being done. FHWA says the Middle Fork road will be much different from the one at Cle Elum, and instead kept narrow and predominantly on its present alignment. It remains to be seen what, if anything, will really happen. ■



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KARL FORSGAARD

State legislators examine ORV damage at Reiter State Forest.



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