

Reichert Moves to Expand Alpine Lakes Wilderness

By Rick McGuire

U.S. Representative Dave Reichert, 8th District Republican, recently introduced legislation to expand the Alpine Lakes Wilderness by adding currently unprotected acres in his Eighth Congressional District.

The centerpiece of the proposed additions is the Pratt River valley, a tributary of the Middle Fork Snoqualmie near North Bend. Additional acreages in the Middle and South Fork Snoqualmie valleys are also included (see map on p. 3). The legislation, H.R. 4113, would also designate the Pratt as part of the national Wild and Scenic River system.

In a November 8 joint press release by ten conservation organizations, ALPS president Don Parks said, "Today's announcement has been over 30 years in the making. Congressman Reichert is continuing the work that was started in 1976 by adding important protections to rare low-elevation old growth



Rick McGuire

Russian Butte stands guard over the long, wild valley of the Pratt.

and mature forests, fish habitat and multi-season recreational opportunities." Don is nothing if not persistent; he was also intimately involved in the original campaign for the Alpine Lakes Wilderness in the early '70s.

The Pratt is a big, low valley — elevation 900 feet at its mouth; just the kind of place needed to round out the existing Alpine Lakes Wilderness. Other valleys in the Cascades which have been protected tend to be far back in the interior of the range, snow covered for much of the year, or are steep, canyon-like valleys such as the Boulder and Baker Rivers. The Pratt, by contrast, is a broad, fairly gentle valley, located at the very western edge of the Cascades, with a true lowland climate in its

lower reaches. Portions of it were railroad logged in the early 20th century, but are now covered in naturally regenerated, maturing second growth forests, with many trees 2 to 3 feet in diameter and 150 feet tall. Extensive old growth forests can also be found. It is prime real estate

in every way.

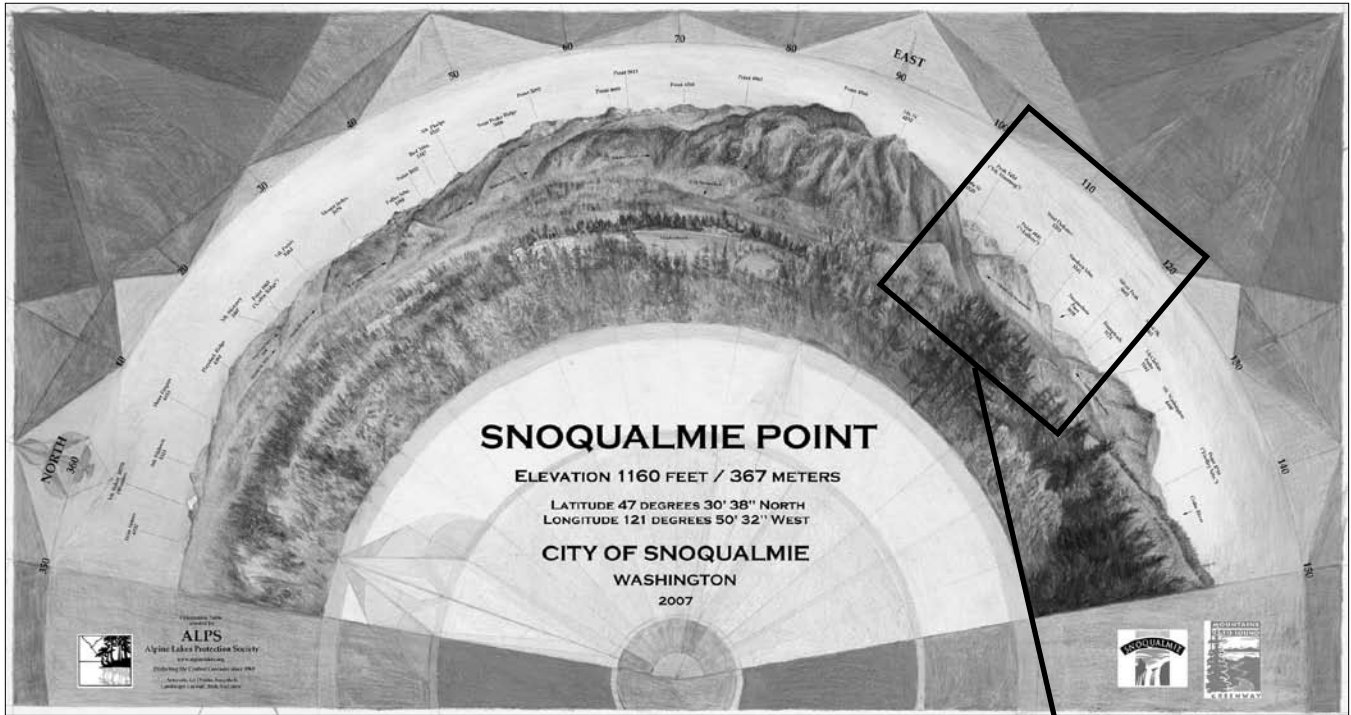
ALPS has long supported the protection of lowland forests and was a leading proponent of the

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ALPS Creates Orientation Table for Snoqualmie Point



Rick McGuire

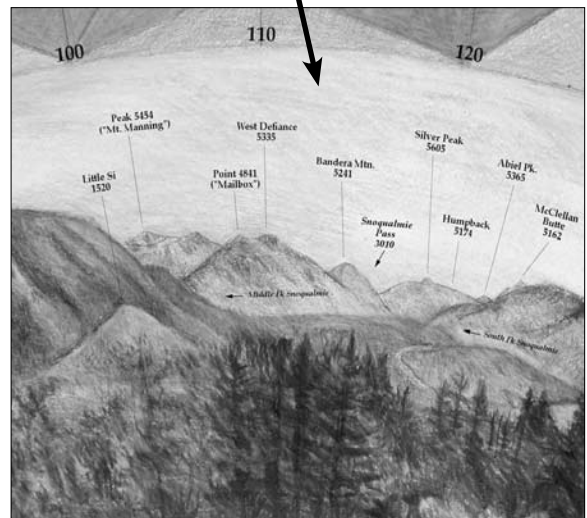
By Rick McGuire

ALPS has designed and created an “orientation table” identifying the peaks and valleys of the Cascades as seen from a new viewpoint park above I-90 at Snoqualmie Point. The new park is located at the old Snoqualmie winery site, upslope from I-90 just above the first exit east of the Highway 18 junction. The Mountains to Sound Greenway was the driving force behind the creation of the park, which narrowly escaped being turned into an “office park.” The park will be owned, maintained and managed by the City of Snoqualmie.

The table design is inspired by the many “tables d’orientation” which can be found at various viewpoints in France. The table is essentially a large compass, with the mountains drawn in an arc, each one shown in its exact position as seen from the viewpoint. Since the plane of the

table is parallel with the “plane” of the Earth, the mountains as depicted on the table line up exactly with the actual mountains. As an observer stands and looks across the table, whatever mountain he looks at is directly behind and in line with its depiction on the table, allowing each one to be identified much more precisely (and elegantly) than would be possible on a crude, flat sign. ALPS believes this may be the first instance of a European style orientation table being constructed at a mountain viewpoint in North America.

ALPS hopes that informing park visitors about what they are looking at will help advance awareness of the central Cascades, and help build public support for further protecting what can be



TOP: Top-down photo of the new orientation table at Snoqualmie Point

ABOVE: South Fork Snoqualmie detail

seen (and beyond). ALPS wishes to thank artist Denita Benyshek for her splendid rendering of this expansive view.

Forest Service Plans South Fork Snoqualmie Trail Expansions

The Forest Service is expected to soon release a plan to decommission roads and convert some roads to trails in the South Fork Snoqualmie watershed south of Interstate 90. New road-to-trail projects (with new trail links in places) will be undertaken on Mount Washington and in the Hansen, Carter, and Harris Creek watersheds. These are the heavily logged valleys one sees up and to the left when driving westbound on I-90, 5 to 15 miles west of Snoqualmie Pass. Close to 20 miles of new trails may be built, most of them multi-use, open to hikers, horses, and mountain bikes.

Most of this country was mercilessly clearcut in the 1970's and 80's, and much of it can fairly be described as a moonscape. However, forests are starting to regrow, at least at lower elevations. The denudation of the higher elevations will last much longer, but it did open up views — mostly of other clearcuts, but also including the Alpine Lakes Wilderness to the north and Mt. Rainier to the south.

The area is easily accessible, and has long been considered a good place to build new trails with minimal impact to critical

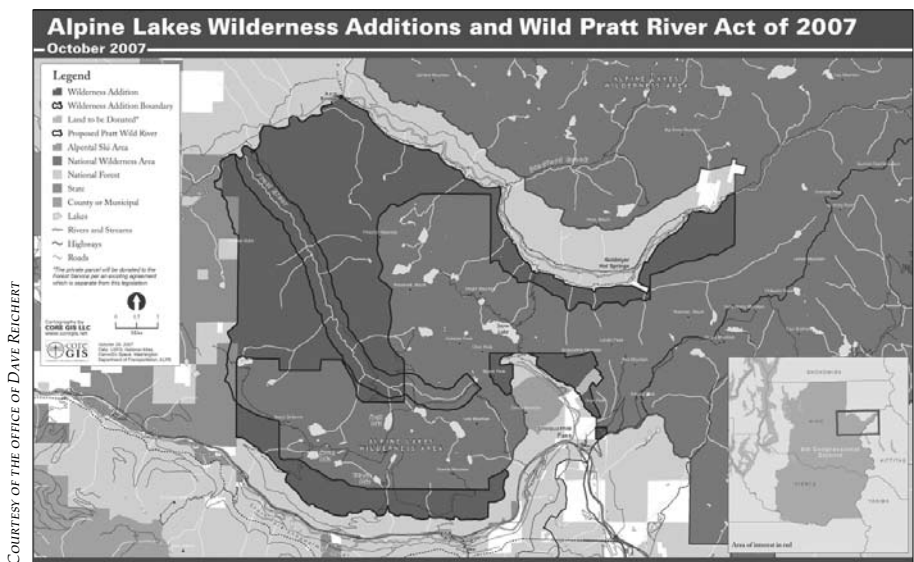
wildlife habitats. ALPS generally supports the proposed trails, while continuing to strongly oppose the destructive Pratt Connector trail proposed for the Middle Fork Snoqualmie. ■

Possible Alpine Lakes Wilderness Expansion

Continued from page 1

inclusion of extensive lowland acreage in the hopefully soon-to-be-enacted Wild Sky Wilderness. Permanent protection for the Pratt has been a longstanding ALPS goal. ALPS wishes to thank Congressman Reichert for his interest in Wilderness and hopes he will be successful in building on the pattern established by Senator Patty Murray and Congressman Rick Larsen with the Wild Sky, by protecting biologically rich, low elevation lands as new Wilderness.

For more information, see <http://www.house.gov/reichert/alwawpra.shtml> ■



Proposal for Wilderness addition

USFS Proposals for Trails serving ORVs

By *Charlie Raymond*

During the past summer the Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests (WNF) released proposals for designated motorized trails in a series of public open houses and postings on the web (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/wenatchee/travel-management/>). The proposals include new miles of legal motorcycle, ATV and jeep off-road routes throughout the forest. The most striking element of the proposals is opening of about 850 miles of Forest Service roads to mixed-use with non-street legal motorcycles and ATVs, a very large increase that, if adopted, would lead to many new problems for safety on the roads and management of the nearby lands.

Within the Alpine Lakes area, the proposal would add a total of 8 miles to present ORV riding opportunities. They are as follows:

about 1 mile of a new trail open to motorcycles in upper Negro Creek, a tributary of Peshastin Creek and just south of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness boundary; about 1 mile of new 4W route open to jeeps and ATVs west of Swauk Creek near Liberty; about 2 miles total of mixed use for motorcycles and ATVs in lower Shaser Creek close to Peshastin Creek and on Teanaway Ridge south of Red Top Mountain; and about 4 miles total of mixed-use for motorcycles on roads in Jungle Creek and Corral Creek in the southern part of the Teanaway region. Maps downloadable from the above web site show the details of these routes.

The most troubling of these proposed additions is the motorcycle trail in the Negro Creek basin. ALPS is opposing this addition to the motorized trail system along with pressing for

subtraction of an adjacent trail to the summit of Three Brothers on the boundary of the wilderness.

It is encouraging that the proposed additions to legal ORV routes from the Forest Service are relatively small in the Alpine Lakes. On the other hand, the Forest Service proposal does not address critical resource problems and recreation conflicts that arise with the present motorized trail system and characteristics of ORV activity. ALPS is taking the position that the Forest Service needs to develop other alternatives that put the existing motorized trail system in the balance, especially in critical roadless areas such as the Teanaway and adjacent areas. A National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis process will start in 2008 and a range of alternatives are needed for public discussion. ■

ALPS Rides Herd on MBS Timber Sales

Trustees Jim Chapman and Rick McGuire met with Forest Service project planners for the I-90 Commercial Thin at the proposed project site last September. The project is located in Section 1, T22N, R9E, and Sections 5-7, 9-11, and 14-16 of T22N, R10E.

It would commercially thin approximately 338 acres in the I-90 Corridor within the Snoqualmie Ranger District, taking out about 4.3 mmbf from 14 units. This project would reconfigure units returned unthinned in the cancelled I-90 II Timber Sale. However, in making this sale more commercially attractive, it may be offering up too much of an ecological sacrifice.

Generally, ALPS remains skeptical that Westside forest thinning can serve to effectively hasten the development of old growth characteristics in naturally regenerated mature or maturing second growth forests. In a letter to District Ranger Doug Schrenk, ALPS President Don Parks raised a number of issues. Access to the forest by roads — even so-called temporary roads — still creates a lasting ground disturbance. Also, helicopter logging is not always so benign in practice as the landing sites created for helicopters can be the size of small ballfields. The planned roads for the I-90 Thin include 1.4 miles of “temporary” roads and 0.9 mile of reconstructed road, not counting safety spurs or

landing sites. Don also brought up the example of a Longview Fibre project (on their land) in the Skykomish valley of a few years ago. This started as a thin but wound up as a clearcut after suffering severe blowdown of the highly-exposed stand. Overly aggressive thinning can also lead to a dense flush of hemlock on the forest floor, impeding rather than accelerating the growth of a multi-layer canopy.

A legal notice for the I-90 Thin is expected to come out in January of 2008.

For more information contact Ranger Doug Schrenk at 425-888-1421 or dschrenk@fs.fed.us. ■

Pete Lake Field Trip Highlights Management Challenges

By Art Day

ALPS trustees Thom Peters, John Villa, and Art Day recently spent a day with Forest Service planners who were seeking input on management of campsite impacts and solitude in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness (ALW). This input was sought for their consideration in revising the Okanogan-Wenatchee Forest Plan.

The day began with introductions and coffee at the Cle Elum Ranger District office. On hand for the Forest Service were Lisa Therrel, Debby Kelly, John Morrow, Mary Bean, Barbara Fish, and "TJ," a regular on the District's trail crew. The discussion then went over Forest Service and Alpine Lakes Area wilderness standards for such items as square footage of areas cleared for a campsite, and number of human encounters per day. These standards vary according to the "zone" one is in: transition, semi-primitive, primitive, or trailless. Because of historical use patterns going back to the creation of the ALW and before, many parts of the Wilderness have never been in compliance with either the Regional Forest Service standards or those found in the Alpine Lakes Area Management Plan. In some cases however it has been possible to bring areas into compliance or to significantly improve conditions, such as has been done through the permit process in the Enchantment Lakes area or through campsite closures and revegetation projects.

The group then traveled in Forest Service vehicles to the "advanced" trail access point on the gated road that branches off behind Owhi Campground at Cooper Lake. After a pleasant walk in to Pete Lake, the group

made stops at campsites all along the lake. At some sites the area of vegetation loss was truly extreme — the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Management Plan calls for no more than 400 square feet, but the bare expanse that first greets visitors to Pete Lake must approach ten times that size. The ALPS trustees observed conditions and listed pluses and minuses of each site on worksheets provided by the planners. From a user perspective, such things as a sense of privacy, access to water (close but not too close), and presence or absence of a duff layer were often key factors.

More discussions followed upon a return to the district office at the end of the day. Lisa Therrel, the Forest Planning Team lead for recreation, went over conclusions that the Forest Service has reached concerning wilderness management:

- Campsites don't typically recover through passive closures alone;
- Even low use can cause heavy vegetation impacts if the ground cover consists of small woody species;
- Good results depend on a combination of strategies including site manipulation, regulation and enforcement, and education;
- Tactics that have been successful in most areas include restrictions on group size, campfires, and stock setbacks.

The ALPS board has generally encouraged stronger enforcement of wilderness regulations, more and better education of users, and some forms of restrictions that promote recovery of ground conditions. We welcome inputs from our members as we prepare to offer formal comments on the upcoming Forest Plan revision. ■



Lisa Therrel discussing recreational impacts



ALPS trustees Peters and Villa rate site conditions with John Morrow



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alpine lakes protection society
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A western anemone.



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**Editor: Art Day
Layout: Pat Hutson**

**For membership
information, contact**

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

dlparks@verizon.net