

**Roads Less Traveled: Access, Automobiles, and Recreation  
in Mount Rainier National Park's Wilderness Areas**

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## Introduction

In February of 2011, administrators at Mount Rainier National Park issued a press release notifying the public of their decision to permanently close the Carbon River Road to private automobiles—the entire five-mile gravel section that lies within the park itself—and restrict its future use to foot and bicycle traffic only.<sup>1</sup> This announcement put to rest a small part of a much larger debate that has raged at the park since its establishment in 1899: exactly *whose* park is it? After all, Carbon Road had long served as a popular, yet primitive automobile access corridor that had retained a wilderness feel far removed from the throngs of tourists on the south and east sides of the park. Moreover, it had served at least a half-dozen popular trailheads— access points for both day-hiking and extended backpacking adventures deep within Mount Rainier’s northern wilds.

Hikers wishing to visit beautiful, flower-covered subalpine meadows or blue-green tarns at places with names like Mystic Park, Windy Gap, Lake James, or Elysian Fields will now walk or pedal an additional five miles (each way) just to arrive at the abandoned gravel parking lot where they once parked their cars. And several easy family day hikes that led to places like Green Lake, Chenius Falls, and Carbon Glacier are now effectively out of reach for all but the most seasoned and well-equipped backcountry travelers—those who also enjoy the rare luxury of extended time away from their urban responsibilities.

Still, there are valid reasons why park administrators decided to close this road—not the least of which is the problem of regular flooding and washouts that have framed the battle between river and road since cars first arrived in 1925. The battle that is the topic of this thesis, however, is ideological. Many contemporary environmentalists see wilderness areas and national

parks not as places to explore and reconnect with nature, but, rather, as ecological preserves. What's more, they consider attempts to restrain human access to these places—especially automobile access—as a positive step toward a more reflective understanding of the ecological utility of wilderness. While these biocentric environmentalists have met with only a modest amount of success convincing the public in general—and outdoor recreationalists in particular—that their views should dictate actual land-use policy, they have had slightly more success with administrative code and judicial interpretations of the Wilderness Act passed by Congress in 1964. But only in nature itself—and the physical destruction its rivers and streams regularly inflict on roads like the one along the Carbon River—have biocentric ecologists found a reliable ally.

A note about labels is in order here. For the purposes of this thesis, the debate over roads, wilderness, and human access will be framed in terms of a *biocentric* versus an *anthropocentric* vision of nature's utility. In other words, an ideological framework wherein ecological considerations are granted supremacy over human needs and desires will be described, broadly, as a biocentric vision; while thought which grants more generous consideration to human needs will be described as anthropocentric. For our purposes, these two labels will sometimes be used interchangeably with the words *ecology* and *recreation*. To be clear, wilderness preservation and its practitioners—*preservationists*—are not defined here by their adherence to biocentric *or* anthropocentric points of view. This is because recreationalists, as we will soon see, were the original preservationists—even though ecologists now lay claim to the preservation narrative by fighting not only against resource extraction, but often against recreation as well. More specifically, biocentric ecologists oppose what they view as unfettered access to wilderness—

access made easier by the use of private automobiles travelling upon the roads that are the topic of this thesis.

Additional caveats are in order. First, the research presented here will weigh philosophical, cultural, and historical arguments for wilderness vis-à-vis access more heavily than the empirical. Additionally, the phrase “wilderness recreation” will be used in a general, albeit widely accepted manner that includes non-motorized, human-powered endeavors. Again, for our purpose here these endeavors will include hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, mountain climbing, rock climbing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, river rafting, and camping.<sup>ii</sup> Finally, the roads that have been chosen as case studies for this thesis include only popular, unpaved, dead end grades that offer long-established access to trailheads in designated wilderness areas. They have all, at various times, been embroiled in controversy over whether or not they should remain open to private automobiles.

Three places where biocentric ecology and its allies have historically failed to make their case for the permanent closure of such roads exist within the borders of Mount Rainier National Park. All three of these dead-end gravel roads, until recent times, allowed recreation-seekers easy access in their private autos to trailheads which, in turn, led them on foot to the more primitive sections of the park. One still does. The six mile long Mowich Lake road in the Northwest side of the park remains open to private automobiles during the summer months—despite the park administration’s past efforts to permanently close it. Built in 1933 and opened to private cars in 1957, this gravel road climbs steeply to the 118 acre subalpine lake—the park’s largest—and is accessed from outside the park boundary by a pot-holed, wash-boarded, state-maintained access route that rises an additional ten miles from the historic Fairfax bridge.



Next on this list is the seventeen mile-long West Side Road—built between 1925 and 1935—which has been closed to private cars since a relatively small section was washed away by a flood in 1988. Originally planned to connect with Mowich Lake, West Side was part of a grand scheme to encircle Rainier with an automobile road between its four and six thousand foot contours, and this narrow and lonely gravel path is now used exclusively by hikers, bicycles, and, oddly, National Park Service trucks and quads. Magnificent examples of landscape architecture in the form of massive, natural stone retaining walls and arch bridges remain here; partly overgrown and moss-covered, but still completely intact. This section of West Side Road—now closed for nearly twenty five years—once allowed automobile access to more than a half dozen popular family day hikes and served as the western link to the famous Wonderland Trail. Before its closure, for more than 60 years West Side Road served as an escape from the hordes of tourists in other parts of the park, and its final fate remains a source of deep, ongoing conflict between wilderness recreationalists and biocentric-minded organizations and individuals.

Finally, the Carbon River Road, described above, is now permanently closed. Here, even as outdoor recreationalists, ecologists, and park administrators have bickered back and forth about roads, automobile access, and the appropriate uses of Mount Rainier National Park's more primitive areas, the river itself has rendered a final decision—at least in regard to the road and access to its surrounding wilderness.

I argue that these three primitive roads on the north and west sides of Mount Rainier National Park —Mowich Lake, West Side, and Carbon River—portray three possible outcomes to the debate over wilderness recreation, automobiles, and access. In other words, it can be said that many of the conflicting values and perceptions of wilderness held by recreationalists and

ecologists are, by and large, mirrored in the present state of these three roads. From the restorative biocentric vision now made possible with the closure of the Carbon, to the unfettered, more broadly-inclusive access still found at Mowich Lake, the debate over the human place in nature remains, at its heart, a battle of values and ideals. On West Side Road, these values remain undetermined.

These values and perceptions are not exclusively local. Each of these roads, in the state we find them today, represents a microcosm of the larger debate about wilderness and access. Additionally, each of these roads informs specific stages in the evolution of wilderness values and, by extension, the future of road access to primitive nature throughout the region. In aggregate, they illustrate the ongoing conflict between those who envision the wilderness at Mount Rainier National Park and elsewhere as a place meant primarily for outdoor recreation, and those who envision wilderness as pristine and inviolate.

Furthermore, arguments over wilderness, access, and roads—widely believed to be a contemporary conflict—are not at all new. In fact, they have historical roots that reach back to the park’s founding. By exploring the cultural history of these three roads, the present dilemma becomes easier to understand.

On one hand, the questions addressed here are a narrower version of a simple conundrum: Is Mount Rainier National Park an outdoor playground set aside primarily as a “pleasuring ground” for work-weary urbanites? Or is it an ecological preserve, meant to protect the mountain and its surrounding biotic in a natural state? More narrowly, for our purposes here, should the wilder northern and western portions of the park remain easily accessible to hikers and climbers by continuing to maintain primitive roads like Mowich Lake, West Side, and Carbon River?

The park's *public* history tells us that the wilderness here is, by and large, an outdoor playground. In other words, local history shows that this particular national park was, in fact, spared from the axe and shovel so that it could be set aside primarily as a place for outdoor recreation and mass tourism. In fact, the Congressional Act that created Mount Rainier National Park in 1899 explicitly states, in its first section, that it is a "public park" set aside "for the benefit and enjoyment of the people . . ."iii But does this history preclude the imposition of additional restrictions on access to the park's more remote corners as wilderness values continue to change and use of the park continues to grow? This is to say, are the remaining primitive areas of this particular park, with its northern and western gates so close to the cities of Tacoma and Seattle, now in need of special protection from the very people who have enjoyed outdoor adventures here since 1899? After all, the *natural* history of this place far predates the political wilderness that local business and outdoor recreation interests "created" here more than a century ago. It turns out, in fact, that many of the present conflicts over roads and wilderness have roots that reach back to the park's first years. Hence, the first objective of this thesis will be to explore this history in detail in order to provide context for the larger conflict over wilderness values, recreation, and roads.

It stands to reason that before embarking on an examination of these values and the appropriateness of roads in wilderness areas, we should first define what, exactly, wilderness *is*. Yet this is not as simple as it seems. Wilderness has changed over time; not just physically, under the weight of an increasing human population and accompanying resource extraction, but in the very way we perceive it. Or, in the words of environmental historian William Cronon, "what we mean when we say it."<sup>iv</sup> Our perceptions of wilderness have shifted dramatically—not

only in the post-Enlightenment world or within the context of late nineteenth century American frontier nostalgia, but throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as well.

In less than half a millennia, post-Enlightenment wilderness has changed from a fearful place of beasts and exile outside the Edenic garden to a place of beauty and awe. Wilderness has transformed its new persona through Kantian notions of the sublime, Thoreauvian transcendentalism, the national park movement, and, finally, ecology and science. Put another way, the original meaning of wilderness has been flipped on its head. Today, what Cronon and others describe as a biocentric “edenic narrative” has taken hold—a narrative where wilderness is held to a pristine standard wholly isolated from the human hand. The irony of this narrative is, of course, that this new vision of wilderness is itself little more than a cultural construct.

Wilderness and the Garden of Eden have traded places—at least in the way we have come to perceive each of them. The wilderness which many human beings now long for is the wilderness they once feared—or even despised.

In light of this new wilderness debate, we are obligated, it seems, to determine whether the wild areas within Mount Rainier National Park represent a definition of wilderness that is flawed or suspect. The scholarly discourse of Environmental History has dedicated itself, in part, to addressing the paradoxical nature of wilderness and, where appropriate, correcting the narrative. Scholarship representing both biocentric and anthropocentric visions of wilderness found throughout the discourse is framed within the context of history, philosophy, ethics, literature, politics, policy, law, and, to a lesser degree, science. One of the goals of this thesis will be to focus on these frameworks in a similar manner. In other words, the debate between recreationalists and ecologists has been researched here in terms that lend more weight to the theoretical than the empirical. And while the scientific aspects of the Wilderness Road debate

certainly cannot be ignored, they will take a back seat to the historical and cultural frameworks of the roads and places we will examine here.

What I want to enjoin within the context of this thesis are the evolution of local wilderness values and the history of these three Mount Rainier park roads—particularly among the region’s large outdoor recreation constituency and its many biocentric ecologists. Toward the goal of illuminating these conflicting, yet often overlapping wilderness constituencies, this thesis will rely on dozens of contemporary authors who have explored similar topics—most notably Roderick Frazier Nash, Baird Callicott, David Louter, Theodore Catton, Paul Sutter, and William Cronon. And with the goal of informing the cultural history of the areas served by these three roads, the scholarship here will rely on writings and documents reflecting over one hundred years of changing attitudes toward the wilderness on the north and west sides of Mount Rainier National Park. Louter has written about mass tourism, paved roads, and evolving wilderness values within the context of Washington State’s largest national parks in *Windshield Wilderness*, and the three roads I will examine here represent, to a certain degree, an aside to his broader thesis. Similarly, Catton has written about the administrative history of Mount Rainier National Park, and his *National Park, City Playground: Mount Rainier in the Twentieth Century* provides context that will augment much of the primary research presented here as well.

Finally, it is the thousands of private citizens and grass-roots organizations who have written letters to local newspapers and submitted public commentary for Mount Rainier National Park’s wilderness planning processes and Environmental Assessments regarding the fates of these roads that represent the public history focus of this work. These public comments are, for the most part, where the true measure of popular, grass-roots wilderness thought resides, and the inclusion of this material will serve to temper evidence that arrives here in the form of deeply

philosophical and theoretical secondary scholarship with prose too often lacking the emotion found in the public sphere.

While Mount Rainier National Park has modern, paved highways on both its south and east sides that allow tourists easy access to breathtaking scenery, lodging, camping, picnicking, and family day hikes, this thesis will not address the issues that relate to the heavily used tourist centers in the park's Paradise Valley and Sunrise-Yakima Park areas. Rather, it will focus on the history and future of three primitive roads that enter the park's more remote northern and western quadrants—its so-called wilderness sectors. I will refer to these three roads as “primitive,” although no small amount of skilled engineering went into their creation—particularly in the case of West Side Road.

In short, the goals of this thesis are fivefold: (1) To examine the coevolution of automobiles and Mount Rainier National Park in a manner that provides context for its bifurcated mission of enjoyment and preservation; (2) to trace the history of three wilderness roads in the park, and to demonstrate that they inform both stages and outcomes in the evolution of the way we think about wilderness; (3) to explore issues and outcomes surrounding similar wilderness-road debates in the region, and to demonstrate that issues well outside the scope of anthropocentrism and biocentrism are in play; (4) to examine how intellectual wilderness thought and historical context can enlighten the debate between recreation and ecology regarding the value of wilderness, and; (5) to determine if these two wilderness visions can be synthesized to inform a compromise position.

This thesis will not rely on a recitation of 1964 Wilderness Act law applied to what may, in fact, be a false wilderness narrative. Rather, it will rely on scholarly thought and a public record that challenges the dogmatism found in both anthropocentric and biocentric circles. The

possibility that a broader clash of worldviews is taking place upon the very public lands accessed by the roads in this thesis will be examined, and the theme of *elitism*—frequently leveled by and against both sides—will hang in the background of each chapter.

Charges of elitism cut both ways. Restrictions and quotas on wilderness use that have been imposed in popular wilderness areas for more than thirty years—including unusually strict controls at Mount Rainier—could become moot if road access were to become limited over time through natural road washouts, tight budgets, and subsequent closures. This may, in fact, be preferable to the regulatory hand of government. Conversely, if more advocates for wilderness preservation are created by repairing and maintaining the roads which provide easy and historically-biased automobile access to wilderness, then maybe the trade-off is, in the long-term, one worth making.

## Chapter 1

### Mount Rainier, Wilderness, and the Trouble with Roads

The establishment of Mount Rainier National Park in 1899 pleased preservationists and developers alike. All agreed that basic developments—road access, backcountry trails, public services, and resource protection—were necessary for this great scenic attraction. In time, as occurred in other national parks, early allies would part company over issues of public use, but during the park’s first years, Rainier’s supporters wanted the same things.

--Arthur D. Martinson, *Wilderness above the Sound*

#### Introduction

The seventy years that followed the establishment of Mount Rainier National Park in 1899 were marked by debates over the purpose of its forests, rivers, subalpine parklands, and icy heights. Nearly all of these debates centered upon access to and appropriate use of the park’s limited real estate. Each of these themes—access and use—hold at their respective cores debates over the automobiles and roads that have delivered the public not just to the park’s gates, but deep into some of its wildest sectors. That this particular park was born at the dawn of the automobile age—and so close to the urban centers of Tacoma and Seattle—has made arguments over cars and roads here especially heated. Moreover, the fact Mount Rainier National Park administrators began allowing private automobiles through the park’s only gate in 1907—the first national park to do so—make this place a sort of “ground zero” for disagreements over roads and wilderness.<sup>1</sup>

The contentions of this chapter are as follows: First, the alliances which promoted the national park idea in general—and Mount Rainier National Park in particular—were all, to varying degrees, focused on recreation; and that today’s widely-held belief that the national park at Mount Rainier was originally intended to be a biological preserve is not supported by the



historical record. Second, the alliance that formed to promote the creation of Mount Rainier National Park remained, by and large, intact until the late 1920s and early 1930s—at which time it fractured when the outdoor club faction of this alliance began to second guess the road-building agenda of park administrators and promoters of mass tourism. Construction in the mid-1920s of the long-dreamed “Round-the-Mountain” road, then underway on the park’s north and west sides, forced outdoor organizations and their members to undergo a sort of *great awakening*—an evolution of thought related to wilderness, access, and recreation that would put them at odds not only with their former allies, but with many of their own members. What’s more, this new way of thinking about wilderness was not taking place in a vacuum, but was, rather, taking place all across the West. It would soon culminate in the formation of The Wilderness Society in 1935, and, nearly thirty years later, with the passage of The Wilderness Act of 1964.

Third, this breakaway recreation faction would later drift into yet two more opposing camps during the years leading up to, and following the passage of The Wilderness Act in 1964. On one side, wilderness recreationalists congealed into a status-quo group of anthropocentric, day hikers, backpackers, and mountain climbers. And on the other side emerged a new, deeply biocentric community whose goals were focused on limiting the growing number of recreationalists in Mount Rainier National Park’s wild areas—and in wilderness areas everywhere—based on the primacy of ecological concerns. This latter community’s goals would focus not only on rolling back recreational access to wilderness by imposing a new bureaucracy upon the park’s landscape, but, by the early 1970s, on lobbying for the closure of specific roads within the park’s borders—the same roads that were the remnants of the never-

completed round-the-mountain project. These roads are the focus of this thesis: Carbon River, West Side, and Mowich Lake.

The goal here is to provide a general overview of the alliance which led to the formation of Mount Rainier National Park, the coevolution of the park and the automobile, and the subsequent fraying of the preservation alliance that took place over the topic of roads, wilderness, and recreation in the years that followed. Finally, a clarification of the present conflict over roads, wilderness, and recreation as they relate to the Wilderness Act of 1964 and its present interpretations will set the stage for a deeper examination of the debate in the chapters that follow.

### **The Early National Park Movement and the Creation of Mount Rainier National Park**

The tensions and alliances that created Mount Rainier National Park were, by and large, similar to those that created broader national park alliances in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The biggest difference between Mount Rainier and national parks elsewhere was Rainier's close proximity to two major cities whose residents laid claim to the mountain as their own. Reasons for the creation of Mount Rainier National Park in 1899 ranged from civic pride and tourist dollars, to scenic preservation, and, most importantly, recreation. Chambers of commerce, railroads, scientists, and outdoor recreation organizations all joined together as "preservationists" to lobby for the new park. Historian Theodore Catton sums up this alliance of convenience most succinctly: "Even at its genesis, Mount Rainier National Park represented different things to different people. There was no preeminent value at the core of the idea. The national park idea is more aptly viewed as a shifting constellation of values."<sup>2</sup>

The notion that American wilderness ought to be preserved in some public form has its origins in the 1832 writings of George Catlin, who lamented the precipitous decline of plains

buffalo and the Indians who relied on them for their survival.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Catlin’s notion is often described by historians as the genesis of the national park idea—an idea that would continue to gain public momentum in the decades that followed. Through the writings of Henry David Thoreau and John Muir—as well as the urban park landscapes created by Frederick Law Olmstead—the American public found a degree of relief from their increasingly urban existence in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For his part, Thoreau explicitly suggested the establishment of “national preserves” after his climb of Maine’s Mount Katahdin in 1846.<sup>4</sup> But only a year before his death in 1862, he made an even more passionate plea for preservation—one that seems particularly relevant to the preservation efforts put forth by Seattle and Tacoma residents agitating for a national park of their own many years later:

I think that each town should have a park, or rather a primitive forest, of five hundred or a thousand acres, either in one body or several—where a stick should never be cut for fuel—nor for the navy, nor to make wagons, but stand and decay for higher uses—a common possession forever, for instruction and recreation.<sup>5</sup>

Although most likely coincidental, it is telling that the last few words of Thoreau’s prescient statement, “for instruction and recreation,” would find themselves recreated in the language of The Forest Reserve Act of 1891 and the legislation creating the 1893 Pacific Forest Reserve—the same area that would soon become Mount Rainier National Park.<sup>6</sup>

Thoreau, of course, never visited the Pacific Northwest—or Mount Rainier. But the broader national park idea kept a living voice in landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead who, in 1865, noted the difference between the private, manicured parks in Europe—open only to the upper classes—and a new state park in California’s Yosemite Valley that was open to everyone.<sup>7</sup> To be sure, Olmstead’s vision of a park was not one of natural wilds; he sought, rather, a pastoral and constructed nature expressed most famously by his creation of Central Park in New York City. But a park of any kind was, in Olmstead’s view, a place that was open

to all and “ideally suited to sport and recreation.”<sup>8</sup> In short, Olmstead’s democratic vision of a park represented the antithesis of European elitism.

In contrast, John Muir’s vision of wilderness was one in which the national park ideal centered on preservation and spiritualism. To be sure, there was a clear biocentric message found in his writings—one which extolled the values of nature’s “smallest trans-microscopic creatures that dwell beyond our conceitful eyes and knowledge.” Yet Muir’s writing in this instance remains a contrast to his oft-stated message promoting public use and recreation as a tool for preservation. For example, Muir also wrote: “Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature’s peace will flow into you as the sunshine into the trees. . . .”<sup>9</sup> It is not unreasonable to say that all three of these early promoters of the national park ideal—Thoreau, Olmstead, and Muir—believed outdoor recreation was the primary purpose of, or at least an indispensable vehicle for wilderness preservation.

By 1893 the American frontier was closing, and Frederick Jackson Turner’s presentation of “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (commonly called *Turner’s Frontier Thesis*) at the Chicago World’s Fair, warned of an America entering a new phase in history—one where the pioneer qualities, hardiness, virility and even the democratic outlook of the average citizen would soon be compromised by the realization of Manifest Destiny and lack of new lands to settle. Not widely read at the time, Turner’s writing nevertheless expressed a growing angst among the American public called *frontier nostalgia*, and his text is widely regarded as the single greatest explanation for the subsequent expansion of the nascent National Park movement.<sup>10</sup> While it is true that Yellowstone National Park had been established more than twenty years earlier (in 1872), subsequent efforts to create national parks had, with notable exceptions in California, largely stalled.<sup>11</sup> What is particularly noteworthy, is that a document

which in no way advocated wilderness preservation or the national park ideal is now widely regarded as the most succinct explanation for its popularity.<sup>12</sup>

In 1833—in the farthest reaches of what would eventually become American territory—Dr. William Frasier Tolmie of the Hudson Bay Company became the first European to enter the area that is now Mount Rainier National Park, reconnoitering the mountain together with his Indian guides from a ridge above the area now known as Spray Park.<sup>13</sup> Painting our first close-up image of The Mountain with his words on a cold and clear October morning in 1833, Tolmie wrote “the snow was spangled and sparkled brightly. It was crisp & only yielded a couple of inches to the pressure of the foot when walking. Mt. Rainier appeared surpassingly splendid & magnificent.”<sup>14</sup>

Fifty years after Tolmie’s visit, the idea for a new national park at Mount Rainier had taken up residence in the mind of twenty-seven year-old Bailey Willis—a geologist who was under the employ of Henry Villard and the Northern Pacific Railroad.<sup>15</sup> Also a mining engineer, explorer, coal prospector, and trail-builder of the mountain’s northern approaches, Willis was the first European to reach the Carbon Glacier, and he soon convinced his railroad bosses that a different kind of opportunity existed beyond the coal deposits they held title to in the Carbon River Valley. His proposal of rail-supported tourism to the alpine gardens of Spray Park on the mountain’s northwest flank—the same place visited by Tolmie a half-century earlier—piqued Villard’s interest and, per his boss’s instructions Willis and his laborers completed the “Grindstone” foot trail to the magnificent, flower-covered parklands later that year.<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, no rails would ever be built very far beyond the line’s branch terminus in area of Carbonado and Wilkeson, but the Northern Pacific’s real motivations in supporting the formation of Mount Rainier National Park were (and remain) questionable as they would reap a massive land-swap

windfall when the park came into being in 1899. Ultimately, the railroad would lobby to trade its worthless “rocks and ice” on the mountains western flank for choice timber lands elsewhere in Washington and Oregon.<sup>17</sup>

John Muir climbed Mount Rainier in 1888 and, upon returning from its snowy heights, remarked that “more pleasure is to be found at the foot of the mountains than on their frozen tops.”<sup>18</sup> In fact, an increasing number of local adventurers were finding their way to the forested and meadowed “pleasuring grounds” at the foot of the mountain—both by way of Willis’s Grindstone Trail on the north, and by way of Longmire Hot Springs to the Paradise Valley on the south. But the practice of setting fire to entire groves of subalpine fir for the evening’s campfire was taking a toll on the mountain’s beautiful meadows, and creating a stir in local newspapers whose readers and editorialists urged greater protection.<sup>19</sup> Partly in response to this nascent version of the modern leave-no-trace ethic, the Pacific Forest Reserve was established in 1893 to protect Mount Rainier and its environs from this type of abuse. Unfortunately, the effort provided no effective enforcement mechanisms and, despite the strengthening of the law in 1897, the push for national park protection continued to increase.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Coalition that Created the Park**

The idea that an alliance of convenience formed to support the creation of Mount Rainier National Park is certainly not a revelation born here in this thesis. Theodore Catton, Ruth Kirk, Arthur Martinson, and David Louter have all written about this coalition. Still, it is necessary to clarify exactly who comprised this alliance and which of their often divergent goals remain historically viable.

According to Kirk, geologist Samuel Emmons, glaciologist Israel Russell, botanist Joseph Leconte, Bailey Willis, and many other prominent scientists added their stature to the

push for a national park in the form of a Joint Memorial to Congress—a document that specifically stated their shared belief that the mountain should be preserved “for the pleasure and instruction of the people.”<sup>21</sup> In addition to this group of scientists, Catton credits two more interest groups for the primary role in the park’s creation: mountain climbers and businessmen.

The Washington Alpine Club had formed in 1891, and, only a year later, the Sierra Club was founded by John Muir. The Mazamas of Oregon were founded in 1894. The small cadre of local heroes who had climbed Mount Rainier all held membership in these clubs, and they were vocal supporters of national park status for their mountain. Although the Mountaineers outdoor club would not form until 1906—seven years after the establishment of the park—they would come to play a major role in its planning. It is important to note the park’s recreation-driven support—both within the scientific community’s “pleasure and instruction” statement of purpose, and in the more self-evident goals of the mountain climbing community. Joining them were businessmen, who clearly believed a new park would attract tourism and the rails, roads, hotels, dining, and guide concessionaires that visitors would require. Chambers of Commerce in both Tacoma and Seattle wanted national park status for Rainier as badly as scientists and mountain climbers, albeit for different reasons.

Catton writes of the underlying theme behind the pragmatic and wholly self-interested groups which formed the grand alliance: “In this consensus view, the national park designation would bring federal administration, and the federal role would entail two desirable and reinforcing elements: protection of resources and improved public access.”<sup>22</sup> In fact, Catton goes on to subdivide the grand alliance even further as mountain clubs, automobile clubs, good roads associations, national park hotel companies, camping groups, university faculty, newspaper editors, and, of course, railroads.

As already noted, the Northern Pacific Railroad held title to the western flank of Mount Rainier all the way up to its lower glaciers by virtue of an enormous and controversial 1864 land grant. As the only remaining obstacle to the creation of a national park at Mount Rainier, the Northern Pacific Railroad, in the words of historian Alfred Runte, “sensed a magnificent opportunity. . . .It could scoop up a square mile of valuable timber for every worthless square mile of rock and ice.”<sup>23</sup> In exchange for relinquishing its “checker-board” holdings on the west side of the proposed park, the railroad received title to in-kind timbered acres elsewhere.<sup>24</sup> Once this last obstacle was removed, President William McKinley signed the bill establishing Mount Rainier National Park on March 2, 1899.

Whether or not the Northern Pacific railroad can be rightly considered a part of the pre-Mount Rainier National Park alliance depends on how we interpret their motives—and how much power we believe the railroad had to affect national park legislation. Catton illuminates this complex alliance: “The lesson of the Mount Rainier National Park Act appeared to be that in any ‘pragmatic alliance’ between western railroads and preservationists the railroads would exact considerable tribute for their political support.”<sup>25</sup> Ultimately, however, the railroad’s dreams about benefiting from the tourist trade at Mount Rainier would amount to little. Automobiles would soon be rolling off Henry Ford’s assembly line, and by the 1920s a new expression of American independence and freedom would make travel to Mount Rainier by train unnecessary and obsolete.

To reiterate, while the national park ideal that bore fruit at Mount Rainier can be attributed to the alliances and motivations briefly described above, one motivation noticeably missing from this effort was anything resembling the contemporary vision of biocentric preservation. Certainly John Muir then held what even today would be called a deep green



philosophy of nature, but why are there not more examples of this philosophy in the alliances that formed the park? Runte notes the pragmatism that was required to gain support for preservation in the form of national parks after the 1872 establishment of Yellowstone when he explains: “Without greater visitation, preservationists had no recognized ‘use’ of their own to counter the objections of resource interests.”<sup>26</sup> Kirk spells out this pragmatism even more clearly: “Outdoor inspiration and recreation for the public were the park’s purposes.”<sup>27</sup>

The 1899 Mount Rainier National Park Act itself clearly reads, in its first section, that the park is “for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.” Still, section 2 of the same legislation allows for “regulations [that] shall provide for the preservation from injury or spoliation of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders within said park, and their retention in their natural condition.”<sup>28</sup> Mount Rainier administrators would adhere to the mandate found in the legislation’s first section during the park’s first fifty years. After all, the residents of Tacoma and Seattle demanded it, and they had an ever-growing affluence at their disposal. They now had cars and they demanded good roads to drive them on. Their mountain and its new national park beckoned on the eastern horizon.

### **Mount Rainier National Park and the Automobile Come of Age Together**

Despite the 1899 establishment of the nation’s fifth national park at Mount Rainier, the National Park Service itself would not be created until 1916; hence there was no master plan or clear direction for the development of the park in the years following its designation. In fact, there would be no master planning at any national park until 1928. Thus, the residents of Tacoma and Seattle defined the first thirty years of the park, finding ways to reach out and enjoy the mountain and its surroundings. Well before the park was established, the Tacoma Hotel (built in 1884) offered excursions to the Carbon Glacier and Spray Park—the first leg by train to the

end of the line in Wilkeson, and then by horseback on Willis's Grindstone Trail to the mountain itself.<sup>29</sup> But these trips were grand adventures requiring much leisure time and money. By 1902, roads and rails increased access to the mountain by steadily making their way toward its southern approaches via the towns of Eatonville, Elbe, and Ashford. The Tacoma Eastern Railroad—a Northern Pacific subsidiary—reached the town of Eatonville, and settler James Longmire's wagon road completed the path into the park itself. Five hundred people per year entered the park by 1904.<sup>30</sup>

But the rise of the automobile would eventually squeeze out railroad tourism to Mount Rainier by allowing the citizens of Tacoma and Seattle to see the park on their own time schedule—and in ways that would enable them to experience and recreate within the park as individuals. By 1907, the first cars entered the park on Eugene Ricksecker's unfinished Government Road, and the following year the first privately-driven autos followed this road into the park as far as Longmire Springs. Mount Rainier National Park thus became the first national park to allow private automobiles in 1908.<sup>31</sup> This was, coincidentally, the same year that Henry Ford's first Model T rolled off an assembly line back in Detroit.

By 1909, drivers could reach the snout of the Nisqually Glacier, and by 1911 the first automobiles arrived in the Paradise Valley. Later that same summer, President Howard Taft arrived at Paradise by car as well—pulled through the muddiest ruts by a team of mules. Half of the ten thousand people who visited the park that year arrived by car.<sup>32</sup> Historian John Findlay, writing about these first years at Mount Rainier, sums up the early relationship between the park and the residents of Tacoma and Seattle: “Railroads and later automobiles travelling over improved highways tightened the bonds between urban centers and the mountain. They made the trip to Mount Rainier a brief sojourn. They brought the mountain closer to home.”<sup>33</sup>

The earliest years at Mount Rainier National Park—before the formation of the National Park Service in 1916—demonstrate this bond between the mountain, the national park, and the residents of Puget Sound cities who sought leisure and recreation on a limited budget; both in terms of money and, more importantly, in time away from work. As the price of Ford’s mass-produced automobiles made them more and more affordable to the general public, the residents of Tacoma and Seattle, in ever increasing numbers, used their cars to seek leisure within the confines of their limited free time. And Mount Rainier was the perfect place for a day of recreation or a weekend outing.

Paul Sutter, who writes in *Driven Wild* about national parks, wilderness, and automobiles, tracks the exponential rise of American car ownership that, coincidentally, corresponds to the early days of Mount Rainier National Park. One needs only to look at the statistics he provides to understand the enormous pressure that came to bear on rudderless park administrators before 1916:

In 1900 there were about 8,000 registered automobiles in the United States, and though that number rose to more than 100,000 by 1906, it represented a small socioeconomic segment. . . .By 1913 there were more than one million registered automobiles nationally; by 1922, more than ten million. When the stock market crashed in 1929, there were 23 million automobiles on American roads.<sup>34</sup>

This coevolution of Mount Rainier National Park and the automobile, along with pressure applied by the recreation-minded residents and businessmen of Tacoma and Seattle, explains why roads became the top priority once the park was established.

But even before the first private auto passed through the park gates, Major Hiram Chittenden—Eugene Ricksecker’s Seattle boss—was proposing the construction of a road that would encircle the entire mountain. His 1907 statement below reflects the birth of the Round-the-Mountain Road—and the genesis of the three roads that constitute the core of this thesis:

A bridle trail around the mountain, just under the glacier line, is absolutely essential to the proper policing of the park, and very necessary for the convenience of tourists, if they are really to have access to the attractions of the Park. The trail should be so located that in time it may be enlarged into a wagon road.<sup>35</sup>

Only three years later, on April 5, 1910, the *Tacoma Ledger* excitedly announced Chittenden's trail as a "plan to build boulevard around mountain," and promoter John Williams, in his 1911 book *The Mountain That Was "God,"* claimed that such a road was necessary for "the safety of the Park and its opening to public use."<sup>36</sup> He even included a fold-out map of the proposed route in the back of his hard-covered edition. (see fig. 1.1)

Far from being alarmed with the rapid pace of road development and tourism at national parks like Mount Rainier, the concerns of preservationists during this period ranged from ambivalence to excitement and outright support. In fact, John Muir, in 1901, wrote the following in *Our National Parks*: "All the western mountains are still rich in wildness, and by means of good roads are being brought nearer civilization every year." He goes on to say "the roads of the pioneer miners will lead many a lover of wilderness into the heart of the reserve, who without them would never see it."<sup>37</sup> Even in 1912, two years before his death, Muir still seemed to support automobiles in national parks, albeit with a more reserved tone: "Doubtless, under certain precautionary restrictions, these useful, progressive, blunt-nosed mechanical beetles will hereafter be allowed to puff their way into all the parks and mingle their gas-breath with the breath of the pines and waterfalls; and, from the mountaineer's standpoint, with but little harm or good."<sup>38</sup> In Muir's world and in his time, automobiles and roads were clearly tools for recreation, access, and wilderness preservation.

This same year, the *Seattle-Tacoma Rainier National Park Advisory Committee*—still made up of the alliance that had agitated for the park's formation—proposed new entrances on all three undeveloped sides of the park to serve as portals for Chittenden's round-the-mountain

road. More than twelve years after its founding, access to the new national park through road building clearly remained a consensus endeavor. David Louter sums up the ongoing relationship between the people of Tacoma and Seattle and their national park more than a decade after its founding: “Mount Rainier was not an isolated wilderness beyond the influence of modern life, but wilderness that was there because of it, and growing more connected all the time to urban areas through roads and automobiles.”<sup>39</sup>

By 1916 the administration of national park lands throughout America would fall under the control of the Department of the Interior and the new National Park Service. The rudderless administrators at Mount Rainier National Park would now have a clearer mission—and that mission would remain, first and foremost, to build more roads.

### **The National Park Service and its Road-Driven Mission**

Stephen Tyng Mather became the first director of the National Park Service in 1916, and he left no doubt about his priorities for America’s national parks. In fact, he spelled out his new department’s mission clearly in a 1916 booklet which he titled *Progress in the Development of the National Parks*:

American motorists are intensely interested in the national parks, are visiting them in ever increasing numbers, and are contributing, by way of automobile fees large sums of money toward park improvement and administration. They have the right, then, to expect that the Federal Government will pursue a broad policy in the extension of road systems in the several parks, and that they shall enjoy all privileges not inconsistent with good administration of the parks’ management and protection.<sup>40</sup>

Given its close proximity to Tacoma and Seattle, and their residents enthusiasm for recreation and additional roads, Mount Rainier National Park would become Mather’s model for what a park wilderness ought to be. Before visiting the mountain in August of 1919, he stopped in Tacoma and spoke to the *Tacoma Daily Ledger* about his desire to build more roads at Mount Rainier: “we will soon build the North Side road up the Carbon River valley, which will be the

first link of the road completely encircling the mountain.”<sup>41</sup> In fact, the national park wilderness Mather envisioned at Mount Rainier synchronized nicely with the vision held by the vast majority of Americans in the new motor age and the Progressive Era. National Parks, in Mather’s own words, would “give as much attention to the needs of the tourist with a small income as to those of the wealth visitor accustomed to luxury.”<sup>42</sup>

Mather’s vision adhered to Olmstead’s view of national parks as inclusive, democratic commons and, even more importantly, pleased the largely middle class residents of Tacoma and Seattle. These residents would, according to Louter, get back to nature “in [their] own machines, on [their] own terms, and on [their] own schedule.”<sup>43</sup> More importantly, he notes that these new lovers of nature “emphasized recreation and self-fulfillment over the collective contemplation of the mountain’s deeper cultural significance,” and that the public’s “perception of the park was mediated by their machines.”<sup>44</sup> The nature of this relationship—particularly between the growing number of outdoor club members and the national park wilderness they reached by automobiles—would be important in the years to follow as the plan to build the long-planned road around the mountain finally got underway in the 1920s and 30s. It seems clear that automobile-accessible recreation at Mount Rainier—and national parks elsewhere—was considered by Mather to be a sort of bulwark against classism and elitism. But soon after his death in 1930, charges of elitism against national park users at Rainier would surface anyhow.

One of the earliest expressions of the coming conflict between well-established notions of unfettered recreation access and biocentric preservation can be found in the 1923 writings of Robert Sterling Yard, whose essay titled “Economic Aspects of Our National Parks Policy” in *The Scientific Monthly* attempts to clarify the mission statement of the National Park Service:

Except to make way for roads, trails, hotels and camps sufficient to permit people to live there awhile and contemplate the unaltered works of nature, no tree, shrub or wild flower

is cut, no stream or lake shore is disturbed, no bird or animal is destroyed. These parks are literally national museums of the original American Wilderness.<sup>45</sup>

Framed within the confines of contemporary wilderness thought, Yard's words seem almost comical. After all, the exceptions he outlines—particularly for “roads” and “trails”—remain at the heart of the biocentric complaint over parks and wilderness. And while Yard's narrative remains a reasonable proposition for many wilderness recreationalists, his list of exceptions no doubt remains absurd to biocentric preservationists. But Yard continues on in the same essay—perhaps revealing a glimpse of his ecological conversion still years away—referring to recreation as the “national parks system's secondary purpose” and warning that national parks were “nearing a danger limit.”<sup>46</sup> In fact, Yard's 1923 essay makes early note of the place that biocentrists believe we find ourselves today: “While we are fighting for the protection of the national parks system from its enemies, we may also have to protect it from its friends.”<sup>47</sup>

### **Mount Rainier, Roads, and Changing Ideas about Wilderness**

More roads did come to Mount Rainier National Park in the years that followed. In 1921, a primitive grade was built to within a mile of the Carbon Glacier's terminus on the park's north side, and in 1925 surveying began for the western portion of the Round-the-Mountain route that was to eventually link up with the Carbon Road. Construction began on the first portion of the West Side Road the following year.<sup>48</sup> On the park's northwest corner, a collaboration of state and federal road construction brought yet another primitive grade to the park's entrance in 1933 and to Mowich Lake in 1935—although the road inside the park boundary would not open to the public for another twenty years.<sup>49</sup>

Meanwhile, plans for roads on the east side of the park had been dramatically altered. The new White River Highway was constructed along its namesake river valley to a junction with the Naches Pass Highway—which was completed from the eastern part of the state over

Chinook Pass one year later. In fact, this route was several miles east of Major Chittenden's original Round-the-Mountain plan and instead traversed the non-volcanic river-bottoms and slopes below the Cascade Crest, miles away from the mountain's glaciers. By 1931, a spectacular paved spur road was built from the White River highway to the 6000 foot level of the mountain at Yakima Park, where a day lodge and campground would soon be constructed with services and amenities to rival those found at Paradise. Mather's dream of national park highways that blended in with their natural surroundings came of age here too in the form of landscape architecture—a blending of engineering and nature famed for its use of natural stone arch bridges, retaining walls, and grand overlooks.

In addition to the new amenities at Yakima Park (now called Sunrise), more hotels, parking lots, and campgrounds were to be constructed along the unfinished round-the-mountain road in the meadows of both Spray Park and Sunset Park.<sup>50</sup> A National Park Service map published in 1926 demarcates the location of proposed developments right in the middle of Spray Park's flower gardens. In fact, it labels the entire north side of the park as a “development area.”<sup>51</sup> (see fig. 1.2)

It is at this point that the first public disagreements over the tide of road construction and development at Mount Rainier can be seen. The first of these disagreements took place in 1927, during the construction of West Side Road—an early section of the round-the-mountain highway. This turning point is reflected in the form of a widely read essay published by a prominent member of The Mountaineers in *The Saturday Evening Post* who asked a simple question out loud: “Why should the government incur enormous expense to encircle the wilderness with roads?”<sup>52</sup> Ruth Kirk sees this article as a turning point; a specific place in Mount Rainier National Park history where one leg of the Rainier Park alliance first questioned



the road-building mania that had proceeded unchecked since the park's founding. But Kirk makes an important point when she alludes to the strong influence this break-away faction still held within the park: "This group definitely—and vocally—included the Mountaineers, whose support the Park Service needed and wanted."<sup>53</sup>

If one recalls that a sizeable part of the coalition supporting the park's creation were outdoor recreationalists, then it comes as no surprise that members of outdoor clubs would continue to seek more adventure than simple auto excursions or overnight camping trips could provide. Many of these adventurers were, in fact, already members of the exclusive few who had actually reached Rainier's summit. The Mountaineers outdoor club formed in 1906 with the following statement of purpose:

To explore the mountains, forests and water courses of the Pacific Northwest, and to gather into permanent form the history and traditions of this region; to preserve, by protective legislation or otherwise, the natural beauty of the Northwest coast of America; to make frequent or periodical expeditions into these regions in fulfillment of the above purposes. Finally, and above all, to encourage and promote the spirit of good fellowship and comradery among the lovers of the outdoor life in the West.<sup>54</sup>

This mission statement placed the Mountaineers philosophically somewhere between the more preservationist-minded Sierra Club based in California, and the recreation-oriented Mazamas in Oregon.

To be sure, the Mountaineers organized the same mass-outings that the Mazamas were famous for—several in Mount Rainier National Park itself during the early 1900s with upwards of one-hundred participants. What's more, these annual outings were, by today's standards, ecologically damaging as they involved chopping down trees for fire and shelter, trampling meadows for on-site baseball games and tug-of-war contests, and the washing of laundry in streams and rivers.<sup>55</sup> (see fig 1.3) Still, neither within the Mountaineers' actions, nor its original mission statement can a biocentric interpretation of wilderness preservation be gleaned. The first

portion of their mission—“to gather into permanent form the history and traditions of this region”—is clearly cultural, and the “natural beauty” to which the latter part of their statement alludes is inarguably attached to the club’s desire for “frequent or periodical expeditions.”

Still, by the time the Mountaineers’ 1927 *Saturday Evening Post* essay was published, local wilderness thought was changing—and this change was not occurring in a vacuum. New ideas about the purpose of wilderness and worries about excessive road building had already been brewing elsewhere—in the mind of a U.S. Forest Service employee named Aldo Leopold.

Roderick Nash notes in *Wilderness and the American Mind* that in 1921 Leopold described wilderness as “a continuous stretch of country preserved in its natural state, open to lawful hunting and fishing, big enough to absorb a two weeks’ pack trip, and kept devoid of roads, artificial trails, cottages, or other works of man.”<sup>56</sup> Four years later, in 1925, Leopold penned an essay called “Wilderness as a form of Land Use” wherein he condemned unchecked road-building on all Federal lands:

Generally speaking, it is not timber, and certainly not agriculture, which is causing the decimation of wilderness areas, but rather the desire to attract tourists. The accumulated momentum of the good-roads movement constitutes a mighty force, which, skillfully manipulated by every little mountain village possessed of a chamber of commerce and a desire to become a metropolis, is bringing about the extension of motor roads into every remaining bit of wild country . . .<sup>57</sup>

Later this same year, Leopold wrote bluntly that he “would rather see cut-over lands than Fords any day.”<sup>58</sup> According to Sutter, Leopold’s cynicism about roads and wilderness had a motive far removed from the elitism of which he would soon be accused. Worried that wilderness would soon be perceived as little more than a playground for the “idle rich,” Leopold wrote that it was important to “kill this conclusion or it will kill the wilderness idea.” His friend and future Wilderness Society co-founder, Bob Marshall, correctly predicted the charges of elitism that

would challenge their new roadless definition of wilderness in a 1930 essay for *The Scientific Monthly* that he called “The Problem of the Wilderness:”

A third difficulty inherent in undeveloped districts is that they automatically preclude the bulk of the population from enjoying them. For it is admitted that only a minority of the genus *Homo* cares for wilderness recreation and only a fraction of this minority possesses the requisite virility for the indulgence of this desire. Far more people can enjoy the woods by automobile. Why then should this majority have to give up its rights?<sup>59</sup>

Marshall answered his own question with a doctrine of “minority rights” wherein he noted the irreversible nature of roads and development in wild areas, and the value of such areas to future generations. But the elitism charge he tried to explain away survives to this day—and it remains at the core of the trouble with roads and wilderness.

Meanwhile, even Robert Sterling Yard, who had once extolled the economic virtues of national park wilderness, was having second thoughts about unfettered automobile access. His earlier list of exceptions to pristine wilderness—exceptions that had once specifically included cars and roads—was no more. In 1932, he called the automobile an “agent of material progress, destroyer of deserts, leveler of mountains and annihilator of time and distance.”<sup>60</sup> Leopold, Marshall, and Yard—all cofounders of the Wilderness Society—wrestled with the notion of elitism as it related to recreation. And each tried to provide a rationale for the paradox that would eventually see the national commons restricted in ways many outdoor recreationalists would come to see, ironically, as elitist.

Back at Mount Rainier National Park, the 1927 complaints of the Mountaineers did not fall on deaf ears. Park Superintendent Owen Tomlinson sided with the club and its efforts to defeat plans for a tramway from the snout of the Nisqually Glacier to Paradise in 1928.<sup>61</sup> But strife within the recreation community itself was sending a conflicting message to park developers, administrators, and the general public. If the 1927 Mountaineer essay over West

Side Road represents the place and time where local recreationalists first took note of the conflict inherent in roads and wilderness, then plans for a new Eastside road in the park only a few years later represents the place and time where cracks in the recreation community's own internal unity were first exposed.

As plans progressed for a new Eastside highway along the very crest of the Cowlitz Divide—from the Naches Highway at Cayuse Pass to Ohanapecosh on the park's southeast corner—many outdoor recreationalists objected, and demanded the road be located along the river bottom to the East. The *Tacoma Daily Ledger* of April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1931 announced “Mountain Climbing Enthusiasts Object to Road Locations.”<sup>62</sup> While the Mountaineers were already on record in support of the higher, more scenic route along the divide, the paper still identified a local member of the more preservation-minded Sierra Club whose opposition to the road plan was well known. With clear allusion to the growing elitist stereotype, the paper accused outdoor clubs of “stirring up those who have time and means for mountain climbing to oppose the route which would give the automobile tourist a never-to-be forgotten view from the Cowlitz ridge.”<sup>63</sup> Sutter also notes this growing rift within the recreation community during this period: “In the years between the two world wars, the modern wilderness idea emerged as an alternative to landscapes of modernized leisure and play, and it was preeminently a product of the discordant internal politics of outdoor recreation.”<sup>64</sup>

As the construction of West Side Road progressed, squabbles over roads elsewhere in the park continued. What's more, the Great Depression of the 1930s paradoxically resulted in an acceleration of road building under the Civilian Conservation Corps—including construction of the Mowich Lake Road.<sup>65</sup> The concerns about roads in national parks voiced by the Mountaineers were largely ignored by the National Park Service during the economic crisis.

In fact, by the late 1930s advocates of roadless wilderness had become so disillusioned with the national park movement that they refused to lend their support to the Franklin D. Roosevelt Administration's proposal for a new *Ice Peaks National Park* along the entire crest of Washington State's Cascade Range.<sup>66</sup> During the height of this debate in 1938, Bob Marshall wrote to his fellow conservationists: "You know perfectly well that if this area should be made a park, it would have roads extended into its heart."<sup>67</sup> Although Olympic National Park would be established the same year, the Ice Peaks proposal died a quiet death—in part because of the disillusionment, lagging support, and internal squabbling of outdoor clubs and preservationists over the topic of roads and wilderness.

A decade of depression-era, road building in Mount Rainier National Park came to a close with the opening of the Eastside highway in 1940—a year that also ushered in more than a decade and a half of relative quiet. Ironically, plans for the Round-the-Mountain road had been abandoned for myriad reasons in 1936 when the West Side Road project stalled at an unfinished bridge over the North Fork of the Puyallup River near milepost 17. And in an about-face, the north side of the park—the same region designated as a "Development Area" less than ten years earlier—was declared by park administrators to be a "primitive area" after an extensive park resource survey by E.A. Kitchin reported "the northern portion of the Park [is] the only good section left for a primitive or research area. It seems indeed fortunate that the northern area has been left in a more or less primitive state."<sup>68</sup> In fact, the Kitchin Report can be interpreted as an early local expression of the ecological values of wilderness.

But an even more radical interpretation of wilderness was taking shape elsewhere during this same period. Aldo Leopold was formulating what he called the *land ethic*, and although he

had articulated pieces of it in his earlier writings, the publication of *A Sand County Almanac* in 1949 put his concept into words succinctly:

An ethic, ecologically, is a limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence. . . . The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land. . . . In short, a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such.<sup>69</sup>

It is within these words, often called the holy grail of environmental thought, that we find the conceptual kernel for wilderness in possession of intrinsic value. In fact, Leopold's land ethic remains at the heart of arguments for biocentric wilderness; in other words, wilderness whose values are self-evident and exist apart from any human need—including recreation.

Controversies over roads at Mount Rainier would flare up again briefly in 1957, during the early implementation of the National Park Service's "Mission 66" plans and the construction of Steven's Canyon Road which connected the tourist center at Paradise with the Eastside Highway near Ohanapecosh. But the seventeen miles of unfinished, unpaved West Side Road would remain open to private autos, and it would become a popular access corridor for hikers, backpackers, and even mountain climbers looking for what they still believed was wilderness adventure on one of the park's less traveled flanks. Similarly, the unpaved six mile long Carbon River road on the park's north side would remain open (periodic floods and washouts notwithstanding) allowing wilderness enthusiasts auto access to their favorite trailheads there. And finally, the Mowich Lake Road—completed twenty years earlier—was quietly opened to private cars in 1955, making the flower-strewn meadows of William Frazier Tolmie's Spray Park little more than a family day hike, and rendering the lake itself a crowded picnic and camping site.<sup>70</sup>

Despite the popularity of these three less-traveled roads with outdoor recreationalists during the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, a rethinking of wilderness values after the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964 began testing the cracks within the outdoor recreation community that had first formed during the 1930s. In the ten years leading up to its passage, outdoor clubs, their members, and preservationists alike almost universally supported the wilderness legislation authored not by Congress, but by the biocentric Wilderness Society's Howard Zahniser. A mere six pages in length, the Wilderness Act was at once both specific and vague. It deferred much of its implementation—and even its defining powers—to administrative agencies like the National Park Service and the U.S Forest Service. Thus, it should come as no surprise that in 1973, when administrators at Mount Rainier National Park announced their interpretation of the Wilderness Act's true intent—particularly its roadless provisions—the fissure between wilderness recreationalists and biocentric preservationists would come close to rupturing.

### **Contemporary Problems with Wilderness Roads**

The Wilderness Act of 1964 defined wilderness as “an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.”<sup>71</sup> It went on in the same section to describe four characteristics that wilderness must possess for Congressionally-sanctioned designation. In short, these included the “substantially unnoticeable” imprint of the human hand; “outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation;” a minimum of five thousand acres; and the possession of “ecological, geological or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.”<sup>72</sup>

But the Wilderness Act also gave four Federal agencies—the US Forest Service, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the National Park Service—ten years to review their lands for inclusion in the new system.<sup>73</sup> This, of course, included

administrators at Mount Rainier National Park, who had to decide which portions of the park fit the new legal definition—after all, the park already had hotels, visitor’s centers, restaurants, and, of course, roads. Section 4(c) of the new law, under the sub heading “Prohibition of Certain Uses,” would prove especially troublesome for park administrators to interpret:

Except as specifically provided for in this Act, and subject to existing private rights, there shall be no commercial enterprise and no permanent road within any wilderness area designated by this Act and, except as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of this Act (including measures required in emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within the area), there shall be no temporary road, no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment or motorboats, no landing of aircraft, no other form of mechanical transport, and no structure or installation within any such area.<sup>74</sup>

In 1972, the National Park Service designated most of Mount Rainier National Park’s backcountry as wilderness.<sup>75</sup> However, this did not include the tourist centers at Paradise and Sunrise.

The park’s many roads were simply “drawn out” of the new wilderness map by creating a “buffer zone” of fifty feet on either side of their shoulders. Environmental philosopher Mark Woods has examined this practice and informs its use in general terms: “A common practice to keep a road out of a wilderness area is to ‘cherrystem’ a road that penetrates but does not cross a wilderness area. This involves drawing the boundary of a wilderness area around both sides of a road; thus, the road appears as a ‘cherrystem’ penetrating the wilderness area.”<sup>76</sup> Doug Scott, in *The Enduring Wilderness*, notes that there is no allowance for these types of buffer zones in the Wilderness Act itself, and he complains that the National Park Service simply invented this practice to avoid agitating outdoor recreationalists—the vast majority of whom would be unable or unwilling to expend the time and effort required to walk into heretofore automobile-accessible wilderness areas.<sup>77</sup>



Rather than impose this scheme on the park's more remote areas, administrators at Mount Rainier, in their 1973 Master Plan, proposed simply closing West Side, Mowich Lake, and Carbon River roads to automobiles.<sup>78</sup> For now, it is more important to understand the two conundrums which have continued to face administrators at Mount Rainier National Park over the fates of these three roads since the imposition of the Wilderness Act. The first is physical; the second, philosophical.

First, the physical. Recall that "buffer zones" insulate a pre-existing road—in a legal sense, anyhow—from the wilderness that surrounds it. But physical wilderness is not as static as the political wilderness that exists on a map. Several sections of the West Side Road, and virtually the entire length of Carbon River road sit next to large, glacier-fed rivers whose paths frequently change during flood events and destroy sections of road grade. Repairing these washed out sections is done at public expense, but when floods and repairs become a nearly annual event—as they eventually would for the West Side and Carbon River roads—then the only possible solution is to reroute the road grade away from the river or creek.

When surveys are undertaken and the park's wilderness maps are examined, it becomes apparent almost immediately that proposed reroutes violate the designated wilderness boundaries which surround the road and, therefore, violate the Wilderness Act itself. For example, when West Side road was hit by a major flood near Dry Creek in 1988, it was determined that the only viable solution to repair the road was to reroute the grade into designated wilderness.<sup>79</sup> In fact, this road remains gated beyond Dry Creek at milepost 3 pending a review of the park's 1992 Environmental Assessment that closed it.

Carbon River road—washed out in several places—has now been permanently closed for similar reasons. Aggradation by the mountain's glaciers and rivers—in short, the "piling up" of

sediments in riverbeds—has made the river up to 37 feet higher than the road grade in some areas.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, this road faces the same legal obstacles as West Side in that it cannot be rerouted within the buffer-zone boundaries established by the park in the 1970s. The only difference between these two roads is that a final administrative decision has been rendered at Carbon River, while the fate of West Side Road remains officially undetermined. Meanwhile, Mowich Lake road remains open to the public during the three or four snow-free months of summer.

The second conundrum is philosophical. On one hand, Rainier administrator's desire to close these three roads in the early 1970s was ostensibly motivated by quantifiable, physical resource damage created by overuse. Catton confirms these motivations: "As much as park officials hated to restrict wilderness users . . . they came to the conclusion that unrestricted use was much worse."<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, the solitude provisions in the Wilderness Act are, at their core, philosophical. Recall that the Act demands "outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation." Still, philosophical considerations regarding solitude are not necessarily biocentric. Thus it seems fair to say that, whatever their motivations, Rainier Park's administrative concerns about Mowich Lake, West Side, and Carbon River roads in 1973 were not entirely ecological.

Since this time, contemporary biocentric preservationists have used the Wilderness Act and other environmental legislation to pressure public officials at Mount Rainier and elsewhere to close wilderness access roads and halt flood repairs throughout the region. Their philosophy, commonly referred to as "let nature take over," is supported by many well-known organizations including the Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society and, locally, the North Cascades Conservation Council.<sup>82</sup> In many instances, these organizations have filed or threatened lawsuits to halt road repairs. Even some outdoor recreation organizations occasionally

lend their qualified support to the “let nature take over” philosophy, including the Washington Trails Association and the Mountaineers.<sup>83</sup>

Aldo Leopold long ago made note of the conundrum that remains at the heart of the trouble with wilderness preservation and, by extension, roads, access, and recreation when he wrote the following: “But all conservation of wildness is self-defeating, for to cherish we must see and fondle, and when we have seen and fondled, there is no wilderness left to cherish.”<sup>84</sup> But to heed Leopold’s warning means, in a very real sense, betraying the alliance that once came together to preserve Mount Rainier’s wilderness. It may, in fact, mean the pleasuring grounds that the residents of Tacoma and Seattle envisioned at Mount Rainier long ago were a misguided effort—a dream corrupted by the subsequent rise of the automobile. For our purposes here, it means that some of the roads we built long ago in order to more easily recreate in the wilder parts of Mount Rainier National Park are worth a closer examination.

## Chapter 2

### Three Roads on the Wild Side of Mount Rainier National Park

In time, when trails and roads are built, this great park will be open to the public, and thousands will be able to enjoy what has passed so long unnoticed. Here as elsewhere, it will require the strong hand of government to prevent wanton destruction.<sup>1</sup>

--Asahel Curtis in the Carbon River Valley, 1909

It is the hope of the club to not only open this region for The Mountaineers trip, but to do as we have done in the Olympic Mountains and Mt. Baker [and] permanently open the north side of the mountain to tourist travel.<sup>2</sup>

--Asahel Curtis in the Carbon River Valley, 1909

#### Introduction

The words of Mountaineers' co-founder Asahel Curtis in the two epigraphs above—written more than one hundred years ago during his new club's first Rainier outing—still inform the trouble with roads, wilderness, recreation, and regulation at Mount Rainier National Park. In fact his two quotes, marginally at odds with one another, represent a sort of schizophrenia that pervades the wilderness-supporting community to this day. Put another way, his statements indirectly pose this question: How can lovers of outdoor recreation simultaneously experience and protect wilderness in a place that is open and accessible to almost everyone? More importantly, how can both biocentric (ecological) and anthropocentric (recreational) preservationists ensure ongoing support for both wilderness and outdoor pursuits if the “strong hand of government” to which Asahel Curtis alluded discourages or restricts such participation? By 1973 administrators at Mount Rainier were attempting to address this paradox with a new master plan for the park—a strong-handed approach that would not only call for strict limits on

wilderness recreation, but for the closure of the Carbon River, West Side, and Mowich Lake roads as well.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter will first present a more detailed narrative history of the park's early twentieth-century round-the-mountain road proposal and the three dead-end gravel roads the project ultimately spawned. It will also take a second look at some of the early problems that foretold the flooding and washout issues that were to come as it examines conflicting histories about the reasons the round-the-mountain project was never finished. This chapter will also reinforce the theme that the creation of Mount Rainier National Park was based almost entirely on its recreational utility. Even more importantly, it will look closely at some of the local public discussions that steered policy to varying degrees on the north and west sides of Mount Rainier National Park—particularly during the period of public input that followed the publication of the 1973 Mount Rainier Master Plan.

Finally, this chapter will take a deeper look at the idea that sits at the core of this thesis—that these three roads, as they exist today, stand as representations of three possible outcomes when the topic is roads versus wilderness, access versus restrictions, and anthropocentric recreation versus biocentric ecology at Mount Rainier.

### **The Carbon River Road**

The Carbon River, which drains much of the north side of Mount Rainier, provides the shortest and most obvious route from the city of Tacoma to the mountain itself, and this is why it was among the first areas within the park to see exploration and development by whites. Recall that Bailey Willis's Grindstone Trail, built between 1881 and 1883, climbed toward the mountain from the coal-mining towns of Wilkeson, Carbonado, Fairfax, and other long-gone settlements. These places were, in turn, within easy reach of Tacoma's residents via the Northern

Pacific's rails.<sup>4</sup> The popularity of the Carbon River valley's uppermost reaches—the portion that is now inside the national park—was understandable. After all, this area contains one of the few temperate rainforests in the lower 48 states. What's more, it sits at a relatively low elevation (1300 feet at the park's entrance) compared to Paradise Valley on Rainier's opposite side, and this provided adventurers stepping off the rail line in Wilkeson more months of snow-free access (by foot or horse) to see a living glacier.

After the establishment of the park in 1899, the popularity of the Carbon River Valley continued to grow. In 1909, the Mountaineers held their third annual outing here, travelling over Willis's trail from Fairfax before constructing a trail of their own beyond the terminus of the Carbon Glacier, and then beyond to the magnificent meadows of Mystic Park.<sup>5</sup> Led by Asahel Curtis, seventy-nine club members began the trek with the intention of climbing to the mountain's summit via a circuitous route pioneered earlier by University of Washington Professor J.B. Flett. The group would travel along the upper Carbon Glacier, across the Winthrop Glacier to St. Elmo's Pass, and then climb the Inter Glacier to a high camp at 9000 feet—a camp which now bears Curtis's name. Climbing up the White Glacier (now known as the Emmons) sixty-two mountaineers—including University of Washington professor Edmond Meany—reached the highest peak on July 29<sup>th</sup> and raised the flag of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition that was, at that moment, being held in Seattle at what would soon become the University's new campus.<sup>6</sup>

This 1909 outing, with its photographic record and well-written first-hand narrative, offers a window into the early practices of outdoor recreationalists and, even more importantly, insight into their thoughts about this heretofore roadless area. Curtis's two conflicting quotes in this chapter's epigraph—recommending the strong hand of government, even while promoting

opportunities for mass tourism on Rainier's north side—are reflected in other accounts of this outing as well. For example, photographs of the expedition show that the group chopped down dozens of small fir trees to use as tent poles—even while Curtis himself offered readers complaints about campers burning alpine fir groves in the Paradise Valley. Another photograph shows a dozen expedition members engaging in a game of tug-of-war on Mystic Park's fragile grasses—one of many such contests, we assume.<sup>7</sup> (see fig. 2.1) In yet another, we see Professor Edmond S. Meany himself, cigar in hand, being bathed after his summit climb on the grasses of an open meadow. Again, Curtis laments: “The park was so beautiful that it seemed unreal, and one regretted that so few could see it.”<sup>8</sup> But the yet-to-be-built auto road that Asahel Curtis seemed to simultaneously promote and dread during that summer in 1909 would soon come to within a mile of the Carbon Glacier's terminus—the first part of the grand dream to build an alpine boulevard around Mount Rainier.

By the time that National Park Service's first director visited Tacoma in 1919, calls for an auto road along the Carbon River into the park were growing. Director Stephen Mather had, in fact, already called for this new road a year earlier in his manifesto for the newly-created National Park Service, which he titled *Progress in the Development of the National Parks*. In it, he stated his desire to expand the park's road system well beyond Ricksecker's new Paradise route. In fact, he made his plans extraordinarily clear: “It is desired that other sections of the park be opened up, and the northwest would seem to be the logical section to develop next.”<sup>9</sup> He went on to describe the round-the-mountain boulevard as the best vehicle for this expansion: “This road, if constructed, will make accessible the incomparable Spray and Moraine Parks, which lie on the north slope of the Mountain.”<sup>10</sup> He went on: “The Carbon River Road would also constitute an important link in a highway around the west side of Mount Rainier to connect

with the present road system. This future road, opening up the north and west sides of the mountain, would be a scenic highway unsurpassed in the world.”<sup>11</sup>

In 1916, a modest amount of surveying had already been done for Mather’s “Wonder Road”—a route that would not only branch west and south from the yet-to-be-built Carbon Road, but also east traversing Mystic Park, Grand Park, and Frozen Lake, eventually linking up with the primitive mining road at the Starbo claims in Glacier Basin.<sup>12</sup> The U.S. Senate appropriated the funding for construction of the Carbon River Road section in 1917, but work inside the park’s boundaries would not begin until Pierce County and the U.S. Forest Service completed building their sections of the road up from the Fairfax Bridge—an impressive structure built high above the Carbon River Gorge—to the park entrance in 1921.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, the Mountaineers not only supported the proposal for this road, but encouraged federal and county government officials to quickly complete the project.<sup>14</sup> As we’ve already seen, however, this would eventually change.

According to David Louter, Park Superintendent Owen Tomlinson worried that without loop-roads—like the round-the-mountain proposal—Mount Rainier would become known “as a place of ‘dead end roads’ and repetitive scenery.”<sup>15</sup> Hence, the Carbon River Road was promoted as “the first link of the West Side Road” which was, in turn, the next section planned for the Mather’s grand scheme.<sup>16</sup> But by 1924, only eight miles of the Carbon River Road were completed inside the park, ending about 1 mile from the terminus of the glacier.<sup>17</sup> The reason for the slow pace of work would become a recurring theme—natural obstacles in the park’s topography, and flooding. In fact, Tomlinson’s 1924 report on the status of the Carbon Road came with a prescient warning: “First high water is liable to destroy a mile or more of the road.”<sup>18</sup>



A new auto campground was built in 1925 at Ipsut Creek—about 5 miles inside the park entrance—and the additional 3 miles of road from here toward the glacier was built as a narrow, single-lane grade with turnouts.<sup>19</sup> (see fig. 2.2.) But by 1925 it had been determined that a route directly up from the campground—over Ipsut Pass to link up with the planned West Side Road at Mowich Lake—would be impossible due to the steep grade.<sup>20</sup> As a result, the round-the-mountain road plans were modified, and the *Tacoma News Tribune* reported this revision in 1927 under the sub-heading, “Old Plan Abandoned.” The accompanying article was sympathetic: “the old plan contemplated a road south past Ipsut Pass and thence to Mowich Lake. At Ipsut Pass there would have been a tunnel and the grades in this stretch would have been very steep. Instead they [have] surveyed a new location which sends the highway west from Mowich Lake.”<sup>21</sup> The details of this revised plan described the genesis of the Mowich Lake Road and revealed a high level of excitement: “When this road plan is finished it will permit Tacomans to go to the mountain via Fairfax, Mowich Lake and Spray Park . . . where the hotel company will erect the next unit of hotel accommodations for the public just as soon as the highway program is finished.”<sup>22</sup>

With this major relocation of the round-the-mountain road and the abandonment of the Ipsut Pass route, the narrow 3 mile section of road above Ipsut Creek Campground was closed sometime after 1928 and allowed to revert to trail.<sup>23</sup> There is no evidence that this closure was controversial. In fact, the *Tacoma News Tribune* printed a related story the following year titled “A True Wilderness,” using a celebratory tone: “there is almost an entire quarter of Mount Tacoma which it is planned shall never hear the honk of an automobile.”<sup>24</sup> By 1931, the *Tacoma Daily Ledger* reported “[e]ighty percent of the area of Mount Tacoma will be left as wild and undisturbed territory of the national park, after all the roads now planned for the park are

constructed.”<sup>25</sup> While it is not obvious in the text of the story, it seems clear that a modest anti-road, wilderness preservation effort was taking shape, even as planned road construction continued elsewhere in the park. Wilderness was now a desired state at Mount Rainier National Park—in theory, if not in practice.

This same year Superintendent Tomlinson, speaking at Tacoma’s Winthrop Hotel, discussed the new administrative outlook at Mount Rainier: “The park service is sometimes criticized for destroying so much of the virgin wilderness of the great outdoor playground surrounding Mount Tacoma. As a matter of fact the major part of the park is being retained for those who will want to follow trails and see nature unspoiled by man.”<sup>26</sup> Here again, it seems clear that a new emphasis on wilderness was beginning to displace a portion of park administrator’s emphasis on auto-accessible scenery—at least on the park’s northern side. But despite this early 1930s “greening,” it is clear that the new belief in wilderness was wholly utilitarian and focused on creating what Tomlinson referred to above as “the great outdoor playground.” Ironically, Yakima Park on Rainier’s eastern side was being graded for a campground, lodge, parking lot, and gas station even as Tomlinson spoke. A truly biocentric vision of wilderness at Mount Rainier was still decades away.

### **The Mowich Lake Road**

Originally called “Crater Lake,” Bailey Willis’s Grindstone Trail passed this lovely place on its way to Spray Park in the 1880s. A miner’s cabin was built here about this time and an early photograph by A.H. Barnes shows that the lake’s shores had already been denuded of trees. (see fig. 2.3)

The road to Mowich Lake was, technically speaking, really just the northern portion of the West Side Road project. The January 6, 1929 *Tacoma Daily Ledger* dedicated a full page to

the two projects titled “Mt. Tacoma Roads to Open Scenic Wonders,” wherein it outlined the roads and developments that were soon to take place. In an almost tongue-in-cheek manner, the article’s unnamed author made note of the park’s changing plans and stated that the new route was now “definitely settled upon.”<sup>27</sup> (see fig. 2.4.)

With construction beginning in 1931, the road was completed to the park entrance in 1933 with state highway funds, and the final six miles inside the park to the lake itself were finished shortly after this with the same federal funding provided for the West Side project.<sup>28</sup> Tacoma newspapers made much of the dedication ceremony for this new entrance to Mount Rainier National Park which took place on the one hundredth anniversary of Dr. William Frasier Tolmie’s original exploration of the park. *The Tacoma News Tribune* dedicated its entire front page to the event which took place on September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1933. Along with Superintendent Tomlinson, several descendants Dr. William Frasier Tolmie were present, including his son, Dr. S.F. Tolmie—the new Premier of British Columbia. Also in attendance at this event was Asahel Curtis.<sup>29</sup> (see fig. 2.5) A large wooden monolith with a plaque honoring the original Dr. Tolmie was placed at the new park entrance, but plans for a replica of a Hudson Bay Company trading post at the site never materialized.

Curiously, the six miles of road inside the park—what is referred to as the Mowich Lake Road itself—would not be opened to private cars for another twenty two years.<sup>30</sup> This delay was certainly not based on any sort of biocentric protectionist mindset with Rainier Park administrators. It was, rather, more likely a budgetary issue tied to maintenance and administrative costs as national parks everywhere entered a two decades-long period of declining infrastructure related to the Great Depression, World War Two, and post-war budget priorities that focused on the construction of the nation’s new suburbia.<sup>31</sup> It also seems plausible that the

limited funds available to park administrators at the time were, in the early part of this period, directed toward completion of the park's East Side Highway. In any event, there were certainly considerations related to wilderness and recreation that played into park planning during this time, and it is likely that the fate of the West Side Road project to the south was also part of this calculus.

The silence at Mowich Lake was broken only by the occasional hiker or Park Service pickup truck, but in the early spring of 1951, the quiet was broken by a small aircraft with Lieutenant Hodgkins of McChord Air Force Base at the controls. Having landed on Mount Rainer's icy summit dome—an aviation first—Hodgkins hiked the remaining distance to the mountain's freezing summit. But upon his return to the aircraft, he was unable to restart his engine, so the Lieutenant pointed the nose of his aircraft toward the Tahoma Glacier, pushed the plane down the slope, jumped into the cockpit, and lifted the plane into the air in a powerless glide, landing on the frozen surface of Mowich Lake nearly twenty minutes later.<sup>32</sup> Once there, he was able to restart the engine and he took off for the nearby airport in Spanaway. An anecdote that is not part of the debate over roads and wilderness, this story is, nevertheless, part of a cultural history which demonstrates the pervasive nature of human access to wilderness. It calls into question the contemporary vision of roadless wilderness as pristine and untouchable. It challenges the edenic narrative.

After the opening of Mowich Lake to private cars in 1955, the area became a popular place for day hikers, campers, picnickers, and tourists of all types. In fact, the south shore of the lake was soon graded for the construction of a primitive campground, and a large gravel parking area was built along the lake's south west side as well. The popularity of the lake, and the ease with which day hikers could now enter the flower-covered meadows of Spray Park, soon turned

the entire area into what would come to be described—on summer weekends at least—as a mob-scene.

### **The West Side Highway**

Major Chittenden's round-the-mountain boulevard plan, in its original form, called for the western portion of the route to begin at Christine Falls and traverse the west side of the park through the sub-alpine meadows of Indian Henry's Hunting Ground. It would continue from there through St. Andrews, Klapatche, Sunset, and Spray Parks, touching the snout of each of Rainier's western glaciers along its way to Mowich Lake.<sup>33</sup> As we have seen, the plans to link Carbon River Road with Mowich Lake were being dramatically altered—primarily because of the steep topography at Ipsut Pass. Likewise, the final location of West Side Road would deviate significantly from Chittenden's original plan. But the reasons for this road's final and incomplete form would have less to do with topography than with the evolving wilderness values of outdoor recreationalists—values culminating in the famous 1927 *Saturday Evening Post* essay where George Vanderbilt Caesar of The Mountaineers complained about unchecked road-building in national parks:

According to those who are in a position to know, at least one national park of prominence in the West is already spoiled to anyone with taste and appreciation . . . I refer particularly to excessive road-building programs within the confines of the national parks. No reasonable or fair-minded person will entertain objections to a limited amount of road development within a national park, opening up a portion of its area to the motor tourist who will not or cannot partake of the full cup of Nature's potion through quiet explorations on foot or on horseback. But why, it may be asked, should the Government incur enormous expense to encircle the wilderness with roads for this great majority who are so little interested in their present condition that they do not dream of exploring them on foot or horseback, and are concerned primarily with the degree of comfort and luxury which they are offered?<sup>34</sup>

The West Side Road project, which had broken ground a year earlier in 1926, was almost certainly the impetus behind Caesar's essay. But the Mountaineers had likely been leery of

round-the-mountain highway plans as early as 1915, when they spent an entire month hiking along Chittenden's proposed route on foot. (see fig. 2.6). This grand circle hike would, in 1920, become known as the Wonderland Trail.<sup>35</sup> (see fig. 2.7) No doubt due to their Wonderland experience, the outdoor club began actively agitating for "natural areas" within the park in 1926. According to Louter, "[t]he group wanted portions of the southwestern and northern sides of the park spared from roads; these included Indian Henry's Hunting Ground, St. Andrew's Park, and Klapatche Park along the proposed route of the West Side Road."<sup>36</sup>

Still, there was not a total consensus about the value of roadless wilderness—either within the Mountaineers organization or the outdoor recreation community at large. For example, after Caesar's *Saturday Evening Post* wilderness essay was published, Mountaineers co-founder Asahel Curtis referred to his ideas as "dope." And other like-minded recreationalists and park promoters, according to Louter, made much of the idea that "the proposed road system would occupy less than 5 percent of the total park."<sup>37</sup> Curtis himself minimized the park's road plans: "It will develop about from one to two percent of the park. It will leave untouched an area in the northern part containing about 125 square miles of forest and mountain." In fact, he went on to state sarcastically that "[t]his area alone will accommodate all the people I know whose habits are such that they cannot enjoy a mountain if someone else is looking at it."<sup>38</sup> Curtis's comments are significant as they are an early example of a charge leveled against wilderness and its advocates that persists to this day: *elitism*. In fact, the ideological skirmish between Asahel Curtis and George Caesar foretold a more contemporary and personal battle over wilderness values that would arise between two Pacific Northwest icons of conservation—Harvey Manning and Ira Spring—almost seventy years later.

Starting near the park's Nisqually entrance rather than at Christine Falls as originally planned, construction on West Side Road progressed rapidly beginning in 1926. By 1928, the grade had progressed nine miles to Round Pass, and this newly completed section was opened to the public in 1930 even as construction continued northward.<sup>39</sup> It is curious that while Superintendent Tomlinson was supportive of the Mountaineers' calls for designated wilderness in the park's northern areas between the Carbon River and Yakima Park, their similar pleas for wilderness on the park's west side were largely ignored—initially, at least—as road construction continued. Two beautiful stone-arch bridges were completed north of Round Pass in 1931—the first across the South Puyallup River; the second across St. Andrews Creek—and the road reached Klapatche Point near milepost thirteen by the end of that summer.

With the Great Depression deepening, CCC crews were dispatched by the Roosevelt Administration to assist with the construction of an additional three miles from Klapatche Point toward the west side's greatest obstacle: the North Puyallup River. Set in a grand alpine cirque with the hanging, snake-like snout of the Puyallup Glacier high above, workers completed a massive natural stone containment wall and a large bridge across the raging river's deep slot canyon in 1935. (see fig. 2.8.) But besides the grading of an additional mile toward Sunset Park, and a parking area on the river's north side, the link between here and the new road at Mowich Lake was never built.<sup>40</sup> With the most difficult topography on the west side overcome, one must look for other answers when trying to determine why construction of the West Side Road was never resumed after this time.

There are two likely reasons for the project's abandonment—one financial, the other philosophical. West Side Road was built using funds appropriated in the 1924 National Parks Highway Bill and, according to a 1931 report in the *Tacoma News Tribune*, this funding was set

to automatically expire in 1935.<sup>41</sup> Time and money may have simply run out on the project before it had reached its final destination. More plausible however, is the explanation put forth by Erwin Thompson, who makes note of a 1935 letter written by Rainier's chief landscape architect, Ernest Davidson, to his Park Service boss, Thomas C. Vint:

For several years I have doubted the advisability of completing the connection between the present two legs of this West Side Highway. . . . To complete BOTH road systems seems to me to be overdoing the highway development of Mt. Rainier, to the definite detriment of National Park scenic and wilderness values.<sup>42</sup>

Since the project was never formally terminated, there was never any official reason given for its demise. Shifting wilderness values seem to have placed the West Side Road in a sort of stasis. Whatever the reason, the abandonment of the West Side Highway project in 1935, and the designation of the park's northern areas as wilderness four years earlier, signaled the end of Chittenden's round-the-mountain dream. Louter summarizes the demise of the Wonder Road succinctly:

The circle highway, based on the nineteenth-century carriage drive, would have to be built on the mountain's steep and unstable slopes and would require more extensive excavation and construction to carry automobiles than wagons. At best then, as one historian suggests, the circuit scheme was wishful thinking, at worst a visual and environmental disaster in waiting.<sup>43</sup>

More than twenty years would pass, but in 1956 the National Park Service's "Mission 66" plans would briefly call for the completion of the link between West Side Road and Mowich Lake. But the final draft would simply call for these two roads to be "improved" in their current state.<sup>44</sup> A Rainier-specific Mission 66 pamphlet published by the National Park Service explains the logic of park roads: "A rapidly expanding travel—tripled since 1930, and doubled since World War II—only compounds the problem. Fortunately, the prime cause of the dilemma—good cars and good roads—also opens the way to a solution—a better distribution of park use throughout the park."<sup>45</sup> This "distribution" logic remains controversial even today, but it is still



effectively cited by proponents of status quo road access. In the end, even the Mission 66 improvement plans for West Side, Mowich Lake, and Carbon River Road were shelved when political and financial capital was instead spent on the completion of the Steven's Canyon Highway on the southeast side of the park.<sup>46</sup>

During the decades after 1935, West Side Road remained a popular recreation access route serving nearly a dozen trailheads, and it stayed open to the bridge at the North Puyallup River until the early 1970s—at which time the last three miles were closed and converted to trail beyond Klapatche Point. Still, a proposal put forth in 1969 had suggested completion of the road to Mowich Lake. This was reported in the *Tacoma News Tribune* and “civic leader” Archie Heany, the subject of the story, seems to suggest that the debates over roads and wilderness which had taken place during the 1920s and 30s had changed little: “I think everyone should see Paradise, but there are many other parts of the park which people would like to see. But they can't for lack of proper roads.”<sup>47</sup> But only two years earlier, in 1967, the South Tahoma Glacier—which sits high above the southern portion of the West Side Road—let loose a torrent of water, ice, boulders, and mud into the valley below. This mudflow destroyed a campground, a popular trailhead, and buried a significant section of the road.<sup>48</sup> The damage was soon repaired, but the trouble was only beginning. The South Tahoma Glacier was disintegrating, and the West Side Road was in its path.

With the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964, the debate over roads and wilderness was, in fact, changing dramatically. A new legal definition of wilderness now existed—a definition that did not include the construction of new roads or even, quite possibly, the maintenance of existing ones in areas soon to be designated as wild. Moreover, this debate was

coming to Mount Rainier National Park, and administrators there would have to wrestle with the issue of roads, wilderness, and access under a looming deadline.

### **A New and Controversial Philosophy of Wilderness: The 1973 Rainier Master Plan**

The Wilderness Act of 1964 required administrators of federal lands, including national parks, to inventory the acreage under their control and determine its suitability for designation as wilderness. Section 3c of the Act reads as follows: “Within ten years after September 3, 1964 the Secretary of the Interior shall review every roadless area of five thousand contiguous acres or more in the national parks . . . and shall report to the President his recommendation as to the suitability or nonsuitability of each such area or island for preservation as wilderness.”<sup>49</sup>

Operating under this deadline, Rainier park administrators released their preliminary version of the park’s Master Plan in 1973 with the following statement of purpose:

This plan proposes a redirection of use and its associated development according to the ability of the resources to absorb its impact. Of primary importance is the removal of development and activities that serve nonessential visitor and management needs from prime resource areas of the park. These activities and facilities should be located at more appropriate places within existing developed areas or, if possible, outside the park.<sup>50</sup>

It was evident, in 1973, that the days of Mount Rainier National Park as a pleasuring ground “for the benefit and enjoyment of the people” were numbered, and would soon be replaced by management more aligned with the latter portion of the Organic Act’s mission: “to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” Rainier administrator’s interpreted this to mean *science* would now (ostensibly, at least) take the front seat when policy and public use decisions were up for debate—at least in parts of the park designated as wilderness. This would, in the end, include nearly ninety-seven percent of the land within the park’s borders.<sup>51</sup>

Even before the passage of the Wilderness Act, land managers had been developing the concept of “carrying capacity” as the expression of the science that would, by and large, govern recreational uses in popular areas. Nash notes that as early as the 1950s, the Sierra Club and outdoor enthusiasts realized that “the designation of wilderness areas was meaningless without management policies that maintained wilderness conditions.”<sup>52</sup> He clarifies: “carrying capacity came to mean the ability of the environment to absorb human influence and still retain its wildness.”<sup>53</sup> In other words, national park administrators would be forced by the Wilderness Act to limit use in specific, high-traffic areas either by the imposition of quotas or by devising schemes to more evenly distribute recreationalists—or both.

In fact, the Wilderness Act would not bind administrators of public lands to science alone. Recall that in its second section, the Act provided specific definitions of wilderness—and one of these required “outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.”<sup>54</sup> Rainier Park officials would have to sort out the aims of the Act in areas soon to be designated as Wilderness not only in places like the popular climbing route to Camp Muir—used by thousands of people each summer—but also in many popular backcountry areas reached by trails. In short, the debate boiled down to arguments over easy access to wilderness. And again, Nash frames the 1973 conundrum well when he writes in *Wilderness and the American Mind*:

As visitation increases there is a point at which the wilderness quality of a place disappears. This impact of wilderness lovers upon other wilderness lovers is the main reason why wilderness can be loved to death. It also provides the philosophical basis for controlling the numbers of even highly sensitive, skilled backcountry campers allowed to enter a particular wilderness at a given time. One of the most sensitive issues in wilderness management is the debate over anthropocentrism versus biocentrism. Behind the big words is the very old problem of whether parks, reserves, and wildernesses are for man (anthropocentric) or for nature (bio-centric).<sup>55</sup>

Administrators at Mount Rainier, believing that they were adhering to the intent of the Wilderness Act, released their preliminary Master Plan—and the strains and cracks that had existed within the outdoor recreation community for decades finally ruptured.

While outdoor organizations like the Mountaineers and the Sierra Club supported the park's 1973 plans, many of these club's individual members, as well as unaffiliated outdoor recreationalists who had enthusiastically supported passage of the Wilderness Act, were shocked when the plan's details were published—particularly the park's intent to close Carbon River, Mowich Lake, and West Side Roads. The report recommended the following:

Carbon River-Ipsut Creek: This unique area of the park is particularly appropriate for the immediate implementation of a visitor circulation system using vehicles other than automobiles. . . .Foot, bicycle, and possibly a mini-bus will provide access through the Carbon River rain forest, and to the Ipsut Creek area, from a parking at the park boundary.

Mowich Lake: Removal of automobiles from the vicinity of this highly scenic area would greatly increase the quality of the visitor experience . . . efforts should be made to keep automobiles as far from the lake as possible. Consideration should be given to ending the road at the park boundary and using leased parking space on private land outside. The present road to Mowich Lake would be converted to a trail.

The West Side Road should be closed to vehicular traffic at Klapatche Point. This would enable a large portion of the west side of the park to be enjoyed by the increasing number of hikers and backcountry users without the intrusion of the automobile. Parking space would be provided at the new road terminus, and the abandoned portion of the road converted to trail status.<sup>56</sup>

In fact, the plan would soon be modified to propose the closure of yet an additional four miles of the West Side Road at Round Pass. The document would go on to classify lands within the park as General Outdoor Recreation Areas (Class II); Natural Environment Areas (Class III); Outstanding Natural Areas (Class IV); Primitive Areas (Class V); and Historic and Cultural Sites (Class VI). And while most of the park would fall under Class IV designation as wilderness, it is curious that only the area in and around Longmire was deemed to be Class VI—of cultural and

historic significance. What's more, park officials designated as Class III all "minor roads," and it is here that we first note the creation of the infamous "road buffer zones."<sup>57</sup>

Catton describes this sudden shift in the National Park mission from anthropocentrism to biocentrism in practical terms: "Most park officials—especially those who had risen through the ranger ranks or whose educational background lay in the natural sciences—preferred to think of the park as a completely natural landscape."<sup>58</sup> Clearly, a new type of wilderness management was being devised for the park's natural areas; one that would, in a very real way, impose a new bureaucracy on wilderness. But Nash points to the obvious flaw in this new administrative mindset: "wilderness management is a blatant contradiction in terms. By etymology and by tradition, wilderness is uncontrolled."<sup>59</sup>

Rainier Park administrators may have believed that their road-closing proposals and backcountry use restrictions would be welcomed by the outdoor recreation community; after all the Seattle Mountaineers had proposed the outright closure of both Mowich Lake and West Side Roads as early as 1969 in a report titled "Recommendations for Future Development of Mt. Rainier National Park."<sup>60</sup> Moreover, the Sierra Club was also debating the new wilderness management conundrum that was forming around the new biocentric paradigm. Ethan Carr notes a more radical example of this developing doctrine: "Sierra Club directors . . . suggested that visitors . . . should be 'filtered down' to those capable of truly appreciating the scenery."<sup>61</sup> But even as these two clubs agitated for more restrictive national park policies, some of their own members feared the proposed restrictions and their effect on support for wilderness. Jack Morton Turner recounts a senior Sierra Club member who lamented, "if restrictive permits are adopted . . . many of the present supporters of wilderness—particularly the recreationalists—will turn against wilderness entirely."<sup>62</sup>

This last quote may be a bit of an overstatement, but Catton's contention in *National Park, City Playground*—that “the public accepted most of the new restrictions without much complaint”—is not supported in the hundreds of letters sent to officials at Mount Rainier National Park during the 1973 Master Plan's comment period.<sup>63</sup> As these letters represent primary source material reflecting the expressed views of the local outdoor recreation community at the time, it is important to briefly examine them here. All of these letters relate directly to the proposed road closures and the imposition of quotas in popular backcountry areas:

In one letter, Mrs. Clarice Berggren raised the charge of elitism and discrimination: “I am against the proposal which would turn Mount Rainier National Park into a ‘designated wilderness.’ How can anyone suggest such discrimination against the elderly, the disabled or handicapped, children, or the majority of citizens who are unable to back pack into our national park?”<sup>64</sup> And another letter-writer pointed out issues of crowd dispersal if park officials were to go ahead with their plans: “As an active backpacker, climber and conservationist, I would like to register my complaint regarding the closure of the west side and Mowich Lake Roads. I fail to see how closing access to these two very important aspects of the mountain will do anything but concentrate people in already overpopulated areas elsewhere in the park.”<sup>65</sup>

But Polly Dyer, a longtime park activist and prominent member of the Wilderness Society, wrote as a private citizen in support of the plans to close Mowich Lake and West Side Roads: “This entire west side of the park needs to be set back one hundred years so that in the next hundred years some semblance of its old self will be available for generations after ours.”<sup>66</sup> The Mountaineers club agreed not only with park administrator's plans to close Mowich Lake Road, but urged Rainier officials to close nearly ten additional miles of West Side Road by

placing a gate at Tahoma Creek: “The Mountaineers reaffirms its 1969 proposal . . . the road should be obliterated and become a trail. All of the area should be included in Wilderness.”<sup>67</sup>

Still, a group of nearly one hundred Puyallup residents signed a petition asking Rainier officials to reconsider: “We the undersigned wish to voice our strongest disagreement with your proposal to close the West Side Road and the Mowich Lake Road. We are, in fact, strongly opposed to all related plans to restrict the usage of our National Park under the guise of conservation . . .”<sup>68</sup> And also opposing some of the planned road closures was a more nuanced letter from well-known climber and author Glenn Kelsey to Superintendent Tobin which began, “Dear Jim . . . few hikers or mountain climbers are going to mourn the loss of the road access to Mowich Lake. I have seen the havoc wreaked by thoughtless people.” Yet he went on to state in his next paragraph, “I am opposed to the closing and destruction of West Side Road. The continuation of use of the road by hikers will help dissipate the growing throngs of people interested in the out-doors.”<sup>69</sup> And the famous mountain climber, Pete Schoening, wrote of his belief that a pro-access consensus existed among his peers: “As a person who uses the Park . . . I strongly urge you to leave the West Side Road open. Most of the users of the Mt. Rainier Park I have spoken to feel this road should be kept open.”<sup>70</sup> And even the widely known conservationist and guidebook author Ira Spring wrote in support of keeping West Side and Carbon River Roads open. In fact, the rifts Ira Spring’s many pro-access stances would later expose within the environmental community and, in particular, with his guidebook co-author and biocentric friend Harvey Manning, remain open wounds.

The intensity of opposition to the Master Plan’s road-closing proposals reached its peak in 1975 when the owner of Mountain Safety Research (MSR)—a respected outdoor equipment manufacturing company based in Seattle—threatened to sue the National Park Service. Larry

Penberthy and a group of like-minded park users published an open letter in the *Eatonville Dispatch* and other local newspapers: “The moment of truth of the right of the people to use Mount Rainier National Park is here.”<sup>71</sup> In fact, Penberthy’s complaints extended far beyond the park’s road closure proposals; his group also took issue with the entire backcountry management system at Rainier, pointing out in their proposed lawsuit that Rainier backcountry rangers had “refused 2,916 requested permits in 1973 and 1974.”<sup>72</sup> Penberthy’s group seemed particularly annoyed that Rainier officials had already “erased” the Mowich Lake Road on the park’s newly published maps—despite the fact that no official decision had been rendered on its fate.<sup>73</sup> By the following year, Penberthy’s rhetoric had intensified. On his company’s letterhead he published a statement dated March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1976:

John Parks, Asst. Supt., stated to me Friday that they are going to destroy the West Side Road beyond Round Pass and the Mowich Road. They will dig up the roads and plant them with alder. We consider this plan of destruction to be vicious in the sense of being marked by excessive violence and ferocity. Tobin and Parks have been informed that closure will be challenged in court.<sup>74</sup>

In fact, Superintendent Tobin announced his final decision to close Mowich Lake Road and to barricade the West Side Road at Round Pass the very next day. And as promised, Penberthy and his group filed their lawsuit in Federal Court citing, among other things, the Rainier National Park Act of 1899 and its language stating that the park was created “for the enjoyment and benefit of the people.”<sup>75</sup>

As a brief aside, it is important to note that public opposition to the new regulations at Mount Rainier did not occur in a vacuum. 1973 had been a contentious year back in the nation’s capital with debates underway in Congress over the proposed National Land Use Policy Act—biocentric legislation that would have severely restricted the use of *private* lands based upon ecological considerations. Emboldened by the implementation of the Wilderness Act—as well as



the early 1970s passage of the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act—supporters of the National Land Use Policy Act had hoped to rewrite the rules of American property ownership, and they promoted their legislation using slogans like “land is a resource, not a commodity” and “we will have to stop thinking in terms of land ownership and start thinking of land holdership.”<sup>76</sup> If these slogans sound familiar, it is because the proposed legislation was modeled, by and large, upon Aldo Leopold’s *land ethic*.<sup>77</sup>

The backlash that rose up against NLPA is popularly known as the Sagebrush Rebellion, and while the bill ultimately died in the House of Representatives, the rules of the game had clearly changed. Anthropocentric considerations would not yield to the new biocentrism without a fight. To be fair, it is incorrect to claim any direct connection between the resistance of private land owners to NLPA and the local opposition to the Rainier 1973 Master Plan. Nevertheless, it seems fair to say that the grass-roots backlash at Rainier was perhaps, in part, emboldened by larger events occurring at the same time.

This background context and Penberthy’s lawsuit were, in the end, perhaps less persuasive than the tide of local and political sympathies for the status quo at Mount Rainier. Washington State Senator Henry M. Jackson—a longtime Rainier Park supporter—had taken note of the recent trouble with roads and wilderness at Mount Rainier. So too had Washington State’s senior Senator, Warren G. Magnuson.<sup>78</sup> Curiously, the newly appointed Regional Director of the National Park Service, Russell Dickenson, overruled Rainier Superintendent Tobin in 1977 after conducting his own year-long study, and he ordered that the Carbon River, Mowich Lake, and West Side Roads all remain open. He announced his decision to local newspapers: “I have now completed my study and am recommending that our wilderness

recommendations to Congress be changed to exclude the roads from wilderness designation.”<sup>79</sup> Despite this about-face on roads, many of the other provisions in the Mater Plan of 1973 did, in fact, go into effect—including the proposed Wilderness designations throughout the park with new buffer zones drawn around the Carbon River, Mowich Lake, and West Side Roads.

Public and political pressure notwithstanding, Catton generously attributes the Director’s decision to more practical motives. He writes: “Probably the main factor in the plan’s abandonment, however, was the concern that closing the road to private vehicular traffic would only turn away visitors rather than get them out of their cars. These visitors would then be diverted to other areas of the park—Paradise and Sunrise—where problems of crowding were even more acute.”<sup>80</sup> Catton’s brief analysis does not, however, in any way nullify the notion that the public letter-writing campaign had its desired effect. In fact as we have just seen, concerns about crowd dispersal within the park were a common theme behind many of the letters registered in opposition to the road closures.

### **Three Outcomes to the Debate over Access to Wilderness: The Carbon River, West Side, and Mowich Lake Roads Since 1977**

Despite the Regional Director’s political bow to the will of many local outdoor recreationalists and other park users, nature itself would eventually render much of his 1977 decision moot. Mudflows would continue to inundate and tear away at the southern portions of the West Side Road as the disintegration of the South Tahoma Glacier high on Rainier’s flanks accelerated. These outburst floods became so frequent, in fact, that in 1992 park officials decided to close the road to private autos beyond Dry Creek (at milepost 3.1) rather than spend their limited budget dollars on expensive annual repairs.<sup>81</sup> In fact, a study undertaken a year earlier had reported that to maintain public access “the only viable option is to relocate Westside Road onto a new location bypassing the damaged section.”<sup>82</sup> The problem with relocating the

road grade, of course, was the way wilderness “road-buffers” had been drawn in 1977, and thus the same report noted bluntly: “Reconstruction or repair of Westside Road in its current location is not possible without getting out of the wilderness boundaries.” In a very real sense, the wilderness gerrymandering that had saved West Side Road in 1977 now condemned it to closure. While the road remained trapped by its own buffer-zone, the river did not.

The mandatory Environmental Assessment published the following year recommended a temporary closure, but the grade beyond Dry Creek would remain designated as a “road”— with its buffer zone intact. Additionally, the 1992 decision made by new Rainier Park Superintendent William Briggie specifically referred to the action “a temporary closure, with re-examination of the potential for glacial outburst flooding every three years.”<sup>83</sup> As of 2013—more than twenty years later—West Side Road remains “temporarily” closed to private automobiles.

After the controversy in the 1970s, the Carbon River Road would, with a brief exception in 1996, remain open for another thirty years. But nature would have a say here too when, during the historic flood of 2006, the Carbon River poured over its banks and washed out nearly two miles of the road in five different places.<sup>84</sup> The flooding here had a different cause than that on the west side. Rather than the glacial outbursts that plagued Tahoma Creek, the Carbon River had simply “piled up” gravels transported down from the mountain since the road’s original construction—more than thirty feet higher than the road itself in places.<sup>85</sup> The permanent nature of the trouble between this particular road and river called for a much more permanent solution than the one on the park’s west side. But once again, when the closure of the Carbon River Road was proposed, the public spoke up against it—although with fervor nowhere near levels reached during the 1970s.

The *News Tribune* reported in a 2007 story, “Readers want Carbon River Road open,” and it published letters from those upset over the renewed prospect of losing auto access to their favorite trailheads and the campground at Ipsut Creek. A letter from Larry Sanford of Buckley conveyed the general feelings of local park users: “I don’t think I’m alone in saying that by not fixing the road to Ipsut Creek, the park service has omitted one of the most popular easy hikes (Carbon Glacier) for 95 percent of the population.”<sup>86</sup> While opposition to the road closure proposals in the 1973 Master Plan was based largely on reactions to a new biocentric philosophy of wilderness, it has been far more difficult to overcome the physical realities of flooding on the Carbon River—and the wilderness buffer zones drawn around the road years ago.

In February of 2011, after riding his bicycle from the park entrance to the end of the road at Ipsut Campground and back, Rainier Superintendent David Uberuaga met with reporters and announced his final decision to close Carbon River Road to automobiles. Still, the road has not been closed to all “mechanized” forms of transport. Uberuaga also announced: “We think it will become a destination for bicyclists and hikers when they learn what the area has to offer. Using a bicycle to get to Ipsut Creek Campground still makes a day-trip into Carbon Glacier feasible, and provides an enjoyable way to experience the area and park.”<sup>87</sup>

Local opposition to the closure has been muted since the announcement, but the limited availability of parking space at the national park entrance station—as well as the task of walking ten round trip miles of abandoned road—has rendered the upper reaches of the grade and the trails beyond largely quiet. The relatively flat angle of the road has, however, made the trip popular with bicyclists. But with the possibility of renewed pressure from biocentric wilderness organizations to remove the buffer zones and envelop the decommissioned road into the wilderness system, it remains to be seen if park administrators will uphold their promise to keep

Carbon River Road open to bicycles. These “mechanized” vehicles are, after all, expressly prohibited under most interpretations of the Wilderness Act.

It is notable that two of the three roads that comprise the remnants of what was once the dream of a round-the-mountain boulevard are now closed to private automobiles—the West Side Road temporarily, and Carbon River Road permanently. But what about the Mowich Lake Road? As of 2013 this road remains open to private autos during the snow-free months from mid-summer through early autumn. Constructed far above the Mowich River, the road simply has not proven itself susceptible to the same scale of flooding and washouts as the West Side or the Carbon—with the exception of an unusual event in 2003 when a long-forgotten coal mine spouted pressurized water ten feet into the air and destroyed a small portion of the grade.<sup>88</sup>

Any contemporary discussions about the crowds which gather along the shores of Mowich Lake or day-hike their way into nearby Spray Park, Eunice Lake, or the Knapsack Valley on summer weekends remain philosophical. And while there is no reason to believe that Rainier officials plan to close the road in the near-term, nature is not likely to assist them if this is their intent. Administrators did, however, commission a University of Washington survey of visitors to the lake as recently as 1998. The survey found that only a small percentage (13%) of 395 respondents would be opposed to closing the final 300 yards of the road to prevent dust and runoff from finding its way into the lake.<sup>89</sup> Additionally, the respondents were split over their expectations for solitude at the lake, with fifty-three percent claiming the crowds there exceeded their expectations.<sup>90</sup>

Surprisingly, only seven percent claimed that the presence of other visitors “distracted significantly” from their enjoyment of the Mowich Lake area.<sup>91</sup> In fact, despite a few complaints of crowding, the survey concluded that “the majority of respondents are quite satisfied with their

Mowich Lake experience”—eighty-two percent rating their experience as “excellent” or “very good.”<sup>92</sup> A common complaint, however, was articulated by one of the interviewees who stated that the campground on the lake’s south shore “looks like a refugee area.”<sup>93</sup> Curiously, respondents were not asked how they would feel about a complete closure of the road at the park entrance. This may indicate park administrator’s unwillingness to resurrect the ideological battle which followed the rollout of the 1973 Master Plan.

I personally visited the lake on a Sunday in September of 2012, and while I saw surprisingly few people near the lake itself, I counted one hundred and twenty-three cars parked in a line along the road’s shoulder, extending more than a quarter mile below the parking lot. (see fig. 2.9.) Most of these visitors, it seems safe to assume, were day-hikers bound for Spray Park. While visiting with the ranger on duty at the nearby patrol cabin that day, it was revealed during the course of our conversation that his duties at the lake were limited to law enforcement and crowd control.<sup>94</sup>

It goes without saying that the trouble with roads and wilderness extends well beyond the three dead end roads we have examined here at Mount Rainier National Park. The pages ahead will explore several similar conflicts taking place throughout the region—even as they examine the dogmatism that has driven the debate on both sides of the anthropocentric and biocentric wilderness divide. While the argument can certainly be made that this debate will remain acrimonious for a long, long time to come, three roads on the wild side of Mount Rainier National Park—Carbon River, West Side, and Mowich Lake—provide us with three examples of potential outcomes. In time, these places may come to serve as examples of a more formal compromise between two opposing visions of wilderness.

## Chapter 3

### Other Roads, Bigger Conflicts:

#### Washouts, Lawsuits, and the Question of Wilderness Elitism

The trophy-recreationalist has peculiarities that contribute in subtle ways to his undoing. To enjoy he must possess, invade, appropriate. Hence the wilderness that he cannot personally see has no value to him. Hence the universal assumption that an unused hinterland is rendering no service to society. To those devoid of imagination, a blank place on the map is a useless waste; to others, the most valuable part.

--Aldo Leopold in *A Sand County Almanac*

#### Introduction

While three dead-end roads in Mount Rainier National Park informed the history of the conflict and helped illustrate three possible outcomes to the debate over wilderness and automobile access, the roads examined in this chapter provide contemporary examples of how the debate remains in motion. It will move to a broader, more regional view to show that the debate over roads, wilderness, and access rages on in other corners of the Pacific Northwest, despite the relatively static nature of the conflict at Mount Rainier National Park. More importantly, it will examine other themes that go hand-in-hand with the differences between anthropocentric and biocentric interpretations of wilderness.

The bane of wilderness roads—raging rivers and creeks—has cut off automobile access to popular trailheads in the Stehekin River Valley and Glacier Peak Wilderness in the Cascade Range, and the Dosewallips River Valley in the Olympic Mountains. And once again, biocentric preservationists have seized upon these washouts as opportunities to give ecological preservation primacy over the reestablishment of status-quo access to the wilderness recreation that lies

beyond these roads. With virtually every recreational and environmental organization of note issuing position statements regarding these roads, it becomes easier to see who is advocating for repair and who is pressing for permanent closure as the battle over the fate of these roads rages on.

Do the battle lines really become clearer when we look at the policy positions of advocacy groups embroiled in the conflict over wilderness, roads, and access? While many of these groups do, in fact, adhere to the more dogmatic tenets of anthropocentric and biocentric wilderness arguments, a closer examination of their policy statements occasionally reveals something else. On one hand, many outdoor recreation clubs support some of the proposals to permanently close these roads—much as the Mountaineers did in the 1960s and 70s at Mount Rainier. On the other hand, biocentric preservation groups occasionally *do* support the maintenance and repair of long-established wilderness access roads.

Simply put, the roads we will examine in this chapter provide a canvas upon which many stakeholder groups reveal themselves. This matters because many wilderness lovers claim to exist simultaneously on both sides of the debate—assigning ecological utility or intrinsic value to wilderness even as they demand federal agencies maintain traditional recreation access to their favorite local trailheads. This dualism hints at the possibility of a middle ground—a compromise zone that may assuage the desires of wilderness lovers who see Aldo Leopold’s “blank place on the map” in different ways.

While deep philosophical issues within the boundaries of the recreation versus ecology debate remain in play, larger political ideologies and economic interests are also important components to this debate. For example, the localists who vented their frustration over road closures at Mount Rainier National Park in the 1970s were, in many instances, part of a backlash



over increasing federal control of national parks in the post-Wilderness Act era. This same localism is still actively trying to have a say in the battle over the appropriate use of nearby federal lands. This is particularly true in the North Cascade town of Stehekin, where the battle between localism and centralization is being played out on one of the roads we will examine here. Inter-agency conflicts are also a component of the debate over roads and wilderness; particularly the historically-informed angst between the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service on the Olympic Peninsula.

Before we address any potential solutions to the conflict over roads and wilderness, it is also important to understand that only a small percentage of the general public is directly interested in the roads or the debate that is the topic of this thesis. In fact, the public remains largely ambivalent about wilderness issues in general. As a consequence, the charges of elitism that “bios” and “anthros” seem so fond of leveling at one another almost always ignore the likelihood that *both* are guilty of this stereotype in the eyes of the public at large. Because of this, the label of elitism—which was first affixed to wilderness recreationalists in the 1920s and 30s, and subsequently inherited by ecologists in the 1960s and 70s—is a dubious charge for either side to make against the other. Nevertheless, it is a component to the arguments at play in this debate, and it is important to examine how it has been used in the battle over wilderness roads—both historically, and in contemporary arguments.

After the topic of wilderness elitism is examined, this chapter will study some of the differences between the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service regarding primitive roads and the management of wilderness. It will then explore the three most current and contentious case studies available—for all of the reasons stated above.

### **Passing Along the Label of Wilderness Elitism: From Recreation to Ecology in the Wilderness Act Era**

While examinations of wilderness roads and the history of outdoor recreation usually center on Wilderness Society founders Leopold, Marshall, and Yard, another prominent wilderness advocate who rose out of the ranks of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1920s was Chief Forester William B. Greely. Prior to the biocentric focus of the wilderness movement in the 1960s and 70s, Greely was widely revered as a visionary, and his enthusiasm for wilderness was largely rooted in its utility. In other words, anthropocentrism trumped other considerations when wilderness management was discussed. Roderick Nash recounts Greely's philosophy of nature and recreation in the forester's own words: "I have no sympathy for the view-point that people should be kept out of wilderness areas because the presence of human beings destroys the wilderness aspect."<sup>1</sup> Greely went on to make his anthropocentric assertion even more forcefully: "public use and enjoyment [are] the only justification for having wilderness reserves at all."<sup>2</sup> But in fact, Greely's pro-recreation wilderness philosophy came with a major caveat: "the only factor limiting public use should be 'the natural one set up by the modes of travel possible.'"<sup>3</sup>

Although the anti-road, wilderness-recreation coalition which formed in the late 1920s and early 1930s was not grounded in biocentrism, Park Service Director Stephen Mather nevertheless referred to these groups as "purists."<sup>4</sup> In fact, his accusation—that wilderness lovers were purists and perhaps, by extension, elitists—endures to this day. The irony, of course, is that these hikers, backpackers, climbers, and other assorted recreationalists who were once the target of Mather's ridicule now level the same charge at the new breed of biocentric preservationists. The reason for this, it seems, is self-evident: biocentric preservation efforts are almost

universally directed at limiting traditional road and auto access to wilderness. But do their efforts equate to elitism?

While Bob Marshall had attempted to quell accusations of elitism in the 1930s with his theory of “minority rights”—preserving wild sections of the American West for future generations—taunts continued to grow louder as both recreational and ecological supporters of the Wilderness Act began gaining political traction in the mid-1950s. During this time, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas stepped beyond the traditional boundaries of the judiciary and lobbied not only for the Wilderness Act itself, but for roadlessness within the areas slated for wilderness designation. Adam Sowards gives the Justice credit for picking up the torch and attempting to counter growing charges of elitism many years after Marshall’s death, and he notes: “for conservationists, protecting minority interests became a common refrain to the frequent charges of elitism, a perspective pioneered by Bob Marshall and one that Douglas employed frequently.”<sup>5</sup>

Toward this end, in the 1950s Douglas led anti-road, mass-group hikes along Washington State’s wild Olympic coast and, even more famously, along the 185-mile length of the C&O (Chesapeake and Ohio) Canal route from Washington D.C. to Cumberland as way to protest motorized “scenic byways” being planned in both places. In doing so, he was not only trying to show that citizens of all abilities could participate in roadless wilderness, but that speaking out against the construction of new roads did not justify the common stereotype—that advocates for roadless wilderness represented a form of anti-democratic elitism as many in the general public firmly believed.

William O. Douglas is relevant here not just because of his judicial stature, but also because of his Pacific Northwest upbringing. Raised in Yakima, Washington, Douglas’s disdain

for roads in wild areas was informed from a first-hand perspective. In the early 1950s he returned to the magnificent Bird Creek Meadows on the southeast side of nearby Mount Adams—a place he had reached decades earlier as a young man, but then only after days on horseback.<sup>6</sup> He discovered that a recently-built dirt road where dozens of cars were parked now reached the edge of the meadows. The Justice later wrote about this experience: “The alpine meadow that I used to reach only after days of hiking was now accessible to everyone *without effort*. It had been desecrated by the automobile.”<sup>7</sup> And in a quip laced with relevance to this thesis, Douglas went on to caricature the recreationalists who arrived at alpine vistas in such a manner: “by car, to the edge of adventure.”<sup>8</sup> Finally, in what is perhaps his strongest and most poetic appeal for roadless wilderness, Douglas wrote the following: “When roads supplant trails, the precious, unique values of God’s wilderness disappear . . . partial evidence of our great decline as a people. Without effort, struggle, and exertion, even high rewards turn to ashes.”<sup>9</sup>

Given his professed belief that anti-elitist arguments for wilderness were easy to make, it is ironic that Douglas clearly viewed wilderness as a testing ground for masculine pursuits—a strong component of the virile wilderness mystique that is often cited by environmental historians as having its roots in America’s pioneer, frontier history.<sup>10</sup> It is even more ironic that while he was sorting through the letters of nearly 600 applicants who wished to participate in his highly publicized C&O hike, he employed criteria which were inarguably elitist. Douglas later described this process in his own words: “First, we eliminated all women; second, we eliminated all publicists; third, we tried to select only those who had some real, legitimate interest in the outdoors.”<sup>11</sup> Douglas never explained what constituted a “legitimate interest in the outdoors,” but his efforts to nullify the charge that protecting roadless wilderness was tantamount to elitism seem tenuous—at best.

Still, many of Douglas's writings also hinted at compromise—even if these efforts seemed likewise hypocritical. For example, the C&O Canal route which he fought to preserve as wilderness was, for the most part, a “built” environment constructed by laborers in colonial times.<sup>12</sup> What's more, his famous C&O hike—an adventure upon which he was accompanied by dozens of reporters and wilderness advocates, including Wilderness Act author Howard Zahniser—was supplied almost daily by supporters in automobiles at road access points along the way. In the end, Douglas confessed: “I am in favor of access roads and outdoor shelters along the canal to entice more city folks into the wilderness.”<sup>13</sup> Sowards notes that even in the heady days leading up to passage of the Wilderness Act, the Justice understood the tension between building advocacy for wilderness and actually preserving wilderness: “Douglas understood the need for access. Since people tended to support wilderness areas they knew, wilderness advocates needed to get others to the places they loved.”<sup>14</sup> This sentiment not only lies at the heart of the debate over anthropocentrism and biocentrism, but it also hints at the power of localism when the topic turns to gaining support for new wilderness designations. Three case studies below will add clarity to the topic of local sentiment as it relates to roads and wilderness, but first a brief explanation of wilderness, law, and land management is in order.

### **Laws and Lawsuits:**

#### **National Parks, the U.S. Forest Service, NEPA, and Wilderness**

In 1972, following instructions mandated by the Wilderness Act, the U.S. Forest Service completed an inventory of the roadless areas under its control. This process, known as RARE—the Roadless Area Review—was completely redone in 1979 as *RARE II* after environmental groups led by the Wilderness Society successfully sued the Federal government over the original version's failure to adhere to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA).<sup>15</sup>

Wielding new legal powers granted by the Wilderness Act and NEPA—powers reinforced by a

plethora of other new environmental laws codified between 1970 and 1973—Environmental Assessments (EAs) became a powerful tool both undertaken by, and directed against the status-quo at the Forest Service and the National Park Service.

Faced with the prospect of spending large portions of their limited budgets on environmental impact studies—and then defending their decisions against the biocentric lawsuits that almost always followed—land managers soon found it easier to close damaged wilderness roads or simply refuse to render a final decision on their fate. Even environmental assessments undertaken in good faith by the Forest Service and National Park Service were often turned against them by biocentric environmental groups trying to prevent road repairs. In fact, a new coalition between environmental organizations, biocentrism, and the law itself seems to have gelled around this time, and this coalition would soon put outdoor recreationalists and the roads they used to reach nature on the defensive.

In much the same way that national park officials at Mount Rainier tried to limit exploding demand for wilderness recreation in the 1970s, their counterparts in the U.S. Forest Service were adopting policies that, according to James Morton Turner, “began actively promoting a wilderness system that was small, pristine, and managed to limit wilderness recreation.”<sup>16</sup> And just like their counterparts in the National Park Service, Forest Service officials adopted *carrying capacity* as the supreme expression of their new biocentric interpretation of wilderness. As a result, limits on both group size and permit availability were soon imposed in high-use areas. But given the Forest Service’s multiple-use mandate, managers also developed a “purity policy”—an idea that promoted the notion of designated wilderness as separate from “backcountry” recreational areas.<sup>17</sup> These so-called backcountry areas would accommodate non-motorized outdoor recreationalists by drawing them away from the newly

designated wilderness areas with easier access and physical improvements like trails and footbridges.

The bio-centric nature of Forest Service thinking in the post-Wilderness Act era of the 1970s was, in many respects, even more doctrinaire than that of their counterparts in the National Park Service. Turner cites the director of the Forest Service's wilderness program who, in 1972, made the following statement: "We've got to make the point . . . forcefully that the 'recreational values' are not the only values in wilderness. After all, wilderness areas were set aside to protect them—even from recreationalists."<sup>18</sup> To encourage their new policy of "wilderness as an ecological preserve," the Forest Service began strictly interpreting the 1964 Wilderness Act and, according to Turner, "resisted installing bridges, maintaining trails, or providing sanitary facilities in designated wilderness areas."<sup>19</sup> The irony here, of course, is that the Forest Service simultaneously continued on with Gifford Pinchot's turn of the century multiple-use mission and steadily increased timber sales and harvests almost everywhere not yet protected by Congress as wilderness.

While a case can be made that adhering to the Act's prohibition on "permanent structures" inside designated wilderness areas was required by law, the actual roads that penetrated wilderness areas on Forest Service land were often shielded from Wilderness Act law by the same non-wilderness buffer zones and cherry stems that the National Park Service employed. Still, faced with the complexity of undertaking expensive scientific studies, reaching out to the public for input, defending against lawsuits filed by environmental organizations, and managing recreationalists themselves, it is not difficult to understand why federal agencies like the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service remained reluctant to repair damaged roads in or near wilderness areas. In other words, leaving a washed out road permanently closed

to private cars would not only dramatically reduce the problem of overuse by recreationalists, but it would keep the biocentrists and their attorneys at bay as well. Refusing to render a final decision on a road repair—even after the completion of an Environmental Assessment—would be even better.

For our purposes here, the debate is similar whether the washed-out road in question sits on national park land, or on land administered by the Forest Service. It is important to understand that designated wilderness, as defined in the Act of 1964, is not limited to lands within national parks. The U.S. Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management also administer a portion of the lands under their control as legally protected wilderness.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, each of these agencies now administers “roadless areas” designated by President Clinton in January of 2001—a topic related to, but beyond the scope of this thesis.<sup>21</sup> The three case studies below include roads that provide access to designated wilderness on both National Park (Stehekin, Dosewallips) and Forest Service (Suiattle, Dosewallips) lands. All of these roads have been closed during the last decade and have recently been, or are presently embroiled in lawsuits filed by biocentric environmental organizations fighting efforts to initiate repairs.

### **The Dosewallips Road: Inter-Agency Squabbles, Lawsuits, and a Lost Generation of Wilderness Advocates**

There are only two roads that enter Olympic National Park on its east side—and barely. One travels along Lake Cushman and then ends just inside the park at Staircase Rapids, where the North Fork of the Skokomish River drains into the reservoir created by the construction of a dam in 1927. The second road enters the mountains farther north from the town of Brinnon on Hood Canal, and then travels west through a mix of old-growth and second-growth trees on Forest Service land as it climbs alongside the wild Dosewallips River. The Dosewallips Road is



paved for the first nine miles, and then turns to gravel as it follows a narrow corridor between two wilderness areas designated under the 1984 Washington Wilderness Act: the Buckhorn Wilderness area to the north, and the Brothers Wilderness area to the south.<sup>22</sup> At milepost 15, the road enters Olympic National Park, and after another 1.5 miles, the grade ends at the once-popular Elkhorn Campground. (see fig. 3.2.)

Since the Dosewallips River flooded and completely obliterated more than 350 feet of the road in January of 2002, the grade has been closed to automobiles just past milepost 10, leaving the last five and a half miles passable only to those willing to travel on foot or by bicycle. Since the washout lies on Forest Service land, yet the road itself provides access to recreation on inside Olympic National Park, a small amount of inter-agency jostling initially took place over responsibility for the expensive repairs.<sup>23</sup> Both agencies claim that they want the road repaired and automobile access restored—not only to the National Park campground at the road’s terminus, but to popular trailheads leading to Lake Constance, Hayden Pass, and a cross-mountain backpacking route over Anderson Pass.

In 2003, the public was invited to comment on repairs to the road, and the responses favored the restoration of auto access by a wide margin. Even Ira Spring—co-author of the popular *100 Hikes* guidebook series with Harvey Manning—wrote in support of the Dosewallips repair:

While walking the extra five miles would not mean much to a week-long backpack, it would impact weekend backpackers and make three day hikes impossible. Every year some natural disaster such as the West Side Road at Mount Rainier and the Dosewallips in the Olympics temporarily, if not permanently, reduce the available trails, and there is no chance that new trails will be built in the foreseeable future.<sup>24</sup> (see fig. 3.3.)

Ira Spring’s position on preserving status quo automobile access to wilderness along the Dosewallips and elsewhere resulted in an irreparable rift between he and Manning—a bitter dispute over wilderness values that followed both men to their graves.<sup>25</sup> In 2003 the Forest

Service released their final Environmental Assessment and announced their intent to construct a bypass road—about .85 miles in length—around the washout. As of early 2013, these repairs have not been made, and the reasons for this inaction are complex.

The Dosewallips Road was, in the 1920s and 30s, part of a plan to construct a road across the Olympic Mountains from the tidewater at Brinnon on Hood Canal, to Lake Quinault on the west side of the range.<sup>26</sup> This road was to climb steeply to 4500-foot Anderson Pass and traverse beneath then-massive Anderson Glacier, before dropping into the lovely Enchanted Valley—a fairyland meadow bound on both sides by 3000-foot cliffs over which dozens of waterfalls pour. The road would continue west along the Quinault River, through more than thirty miles of old-growth forest, before linking up with a road being constructed eastward from Lake Quinault.

In fact, this cross-mountain road proposal was part of a Forest Service scheme to maintain control over the forest lands of the Olympic Mountains and to quell growing public calls for the creation of Olympic National Park in the 1930s. According to Louter, “The Forest Service’s attempts to prevent the creation of a park by providing a parklike experience were shrewd. The Forest Service responded to demands for a national park with what it seemed to envision as the most significant feature of a national park: a mountain highway.”<sup>27</sup> Still, Louter notes that the Forest Service was, even in the 1930s, making the same argument offered by wilderness recreationalists to this day: “the road would provide direct access to the high country, reducing the time backcountry travelers spent hiking or riding through the region’s ‘least interesting country.’ It would thus expand the range and quality of wilderness encounters.”<sup>28</sup>

The Forest Service ultimately failed to prevent the creation of Olympic National Park in 1938—an event that put an end to the proposed Brinnon-to-Quinault road. Instead of a scenic highway, a 29-mile foot and horse trail would cross the Olympic Range between the final road

terminus at Graves Creek on the west side of the mountains, and the Elkhorn Campground at the end of the unfinished Dosewallips Road on the east. And while Olympic National Park would occupy the center of the mountain range, Forest Service-controlled lands would continue to surround virtually the entire new park.

Rather than initiating a program of road construction within the park itself—as administrators at Rainier had done—managers of the new Olympic National Park would only build and maintain roads at various points around, and up to the new park’s outer perimeter. This manifestation of changing wilderness values regarding roads in the late 1930s was part of the same shifting ideological landscape that put a stop to the round-the-mountain road project at Rainier. Again, Louter makes much of this changing paradigm when he notes the following: “By the late 1930s, both transpark roads and circle highways were anathema to national parks, especially those dedicated to wilderness like Olympic.”<sup>29</sup> Since Olympic National Park would not be crisscrossed by roads, most of the points along the edges of the park which were accessible to cars would have to first cross Forest Service lands.

Since the creation of Olympic National Park in 1938, this arrangement made the Forest Service a sort of “gate-keeper”—an arrangement that remains unchanged to this day. Curiously, the Forest Service has recently reminded the public of this arrangement in their 2010 Dosewallips Road Environmental Impact Statement, using subtle and perhaps patronizing language:

The Forest surrounds the park for about 75% of the park’s interior. Consequently a majority of the motorized access routes into the interior portion of the park, which are integral to the park meeting its recreational objectives, first cross the Forest. This is the case for the Dosewallips Road and as such the Forest is taking action to meet the park’s need.<sup>30</sup>

Again, as of 2010 the Forest Service's claimed "desired state" for the Dosewallips Road, expressed in their final Environmental Analysis, has been to repair and reopen the grade to automobiles. What's more, by the Forest Service's own admission, their failure to initiate road repairs has led to a marked decrease in wilderness use—and some friction with managers at Olympic National Park.

The Forest Service's 2010 Environmental Assessment admits plainly: "the park's recreation goal is not being met. For the post-washout period (2002-2005) as compared to the pre-washout period (1996-2001), the numbers of recreation visitors and campground users were down 25%, and numbers of trail users were down 58% and backcountry users down 21%."<sup>31</sup> The document also notes that national park administrators have repeatedly written to their Forest Service counterparts in support of repairing the Dosewallips Road and "restoring motorized access to continue to provide access for park visitors to the Dosewallips [Elkhorn] Campground and trailheads."<sup>32</sup> Indeed, Olympic National Park officials have expressed a decidedly non-elitist bent, appealing to Forest Service action on behalf of recreation: "The Dosewallips area fills an important niche in providing for a wide range of visitor recreation experiences. It provides a camping experience in tune with the wilderness experience/concept for those people who do not have the ability to backpack and 'rough it.'"<sup>33</sup>

Since announcing their preferred alternative in 2010—to repair the washout by constructing a bypass road—the Forest Service has taken no action to actually initiate the project. In fact, shortly after their 2010 Environmental Impact Statement was released, the Forest Service announced that there would be no "record of decision" (ROD) on actual construction. The reason given for this inaction was a lack of funding.<sup>34</sup> But given the historically contentious relationship between the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service on the Olympic

Peninsula—and the Forest Service’s eagerness to push ahead with controversial road repairs in other places such as the Suiattle River Valley—it seems likely that some form of historically-biased, inter-agency angst remains part of the Forest Service calculus along the Dosewallips.

Another reason for Forest Service foot-dragging over the Dosewallips Road repair is, of course, the battle between biocentric and anthropocentric interpretations of wilderness. Ira Spring’s 2002 letter in support of reopening the road was heralded by recreationalists as a reasonable position taken by a well-known hero of the wilderness preservation movement. In fact, the Port Angeles-based advocacy organization, *Friends of Olympic National Park*, has often cited Spring’s position in its newsletters and correspondence with Forest Service officials in support of the reopening of the road. Of greater concern to this group, however, is their belief that opportunities to promote advocacy for wilderness preservation are being lost in the Dosewallips Valley. A portion of their complaint reads: “visitation to backcountry destinations in the Dosewallips drainage has fallen by 71% since the washout as indicated by the number of backcountry permits issued.”<sup>35</sup> They make note of the Forest Service’s own assessment which, in turn, notes waning interest in outdoor activities among younger citizens and people of color: “the proportion of 9-12 year old children who spent time on outdoor activities such as hiking fell by 50 percent and Pacific Northwest studies have shown Asian and Hispanic cultures prefer a higher development level of recreation infrastructure.”<sup>36</sup>

In addition to Ira Spring’s well-known guidebooks, nature photography, and wilderness preservation efforts, he is also revered as the co-founder of the Seattle-based *Washington Trails Association* (WTA). Founded as a pro-trails outdoor club, the WTA’s mission—“to preserve, enhance, and promote hiking opportunities in Washington State through collaboration,

education, advocacy and volunteer trail maintenance”—seems completely at odds with its stated position that the Dosewallips Road should be permanently closed:

WTA has always taken care to articulate a conservationist vision for hikers. We couple our advocacy for hiking and hikers with our love of, and care for, the wildlands that make our activity so compelling. Roads have always been a particularly thorny area for hikers. While we love the access that roads give us to the beckoning backcountry, we fear their encroachment into our precious wildlands. While we still believe that there is a valid recreational reason to rebuild this road, we must weigh that carefully against the costs to the environment, and to the species that depend on a clean, healthy river ecosystem. On balance, we have reluctantly drawn the conclusion that the road should not be reopened and that a trail be built to provide access to the upper valley.<sup>37</sup>

While it may strike us as strange that the WTA simultaneously supports the repair and reopening of the Suiattle Road in the North Cascades, even as it calls for the permanent closure of the Dosewallips, it is not too surprising that the position many outdoor clubs find themselves in—with membership often split between the ecological and recreational values of wilderness—demands the appearance of balance.

Less concerned with compromise is a local environmental organization called *Olympic Park Associates* (OPA), which sued the Forest Service after the publication of the first Environmental Assessment in 2003, claiming it did not adequately address concerns over salmon spawning grounds in the river itself.<sup>38</sup> Only after the Forest Service subsequently scrapped their first Environmental Assessment and addressed the group’s concern—with the proposed .85 mile re-route alternative—did OPA withdraw its complaint. OPA, however, remains unsatisfied with this most recent assessment as well. In particular, they question why the Forest Service did not consider the permanent conversion of the upper Dosewallips road to non-motorized use. Additionally, they are furious that the Forest Service’s preferred alternative—the .85-mile long, up-slope bypass—will require the removal of nearly 7 acres of old growth forest. Their complaint specifically states: “Relocating the Dosewallips Road through some of the most spectacular old-growth forest in the east Olympics just doesn't make sense. Conversion of the

upper road to a family-friendly hiking, biking and equestrian trail is the only sensible solution for the Dosewallips. But it's a solution the Forest Service refuses to consider.”<sup>39</sup>

While the old growth trees slated to be cut once road construction begins lie just outside the Buckhorn Wilderness’ southern boundary, environmentalists from around the region now come to visit this place for themselves, and have begun calling it the “Polly Dyer Grove,” after the well-known local biocentric activist.<sup>40</sup> These activists remain hopeful that the boundaries of the Buckhorn Wilderness Area will be expanded to include the area proposed in the road reroute, and they complain that cutting this grove “could affect its future inclusion into the wilderness system.”<sup>41</sup>

The Sierra Club has jumped into the debate as well, recently suggesting that the present Forest Service strategy—advocating for the repair of the road in their Environmental Assessment, even as they issue no Record of Decision on construction—suits the club’s biocentric objectives well. What’s more, their official policy position on the matter contains an unveiled threat: “Sierra Club prefers the Dosewallips Road to be used only as a backpacking trail and not be rebuilt through old growth forests. Since no funding is or will soon be available to implement either option, it is likely wise to not invite a lawsuit at this time.”<sup>42</sup>

A recent discussion with a Forest Service representative confirmed the presence of “friction” between managers at Olympic National Forest, and their counterparts at Olympic National Park.<sup>43</sup> Also confirmed during this interview was the notion that this friction has both historical roots and budgetary components. Paraphrasing here, the interviewee stated: “One question that we ask ourselves at the Forest Service office is this: why would we spend nearly four million dollars to repair a road that serves recreation interests almost exclusively on National Park lands?”<sup>44</sup> Also a point of concern during the interview was the Forest Service’s

exposure to lawsuits—like those implied by the Sierra Club in the paragraph above—and the fact that defending against such lawsuits would be, essentially, on behalf of their counterparts at Olympic National Park. A sort of stalemate has emerged in the Dosewallips Valley, and biocentrists, for all intents and purposes, have won their case for roadless wilderness by default.

### **Localism versus Centralization: The Stehekin River Road**

Long before the establishment of North Cascades National Park in 1968, or the Stephen Mather Wilderness Area in 1988, the Stehekin River Road wound its way up the remote valley above the town of Stehekin—a small, isolated settlement at the north end of 55-mile long Lake Chelan reachable only by boat or plane. The administration of public lands in the valley that surrounds the Stehekin Road itself is complex. The first ten miles of the road above town lie within the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area—a public land designation administered by the National Park Service, but with less-restrictive rules that allow uses such as hunting, snowmobiles, and mountain bikes.<sup>45</sup> The upper thirteen miles of the road lie within the North Cascades National Park itself, and the road terminates at Cottonwood Camp, only four miles below the crest of the Cascade Range. To complicate the land arrangement even further, the Washington Parks Wilderness Act (written by Senator Daniel J. Evans of Washington State and signed by Ronald Reagan in 1988) created the Stephen T. Mather Wilderness Area—a designation that encompasses most of the park’s southern unit as well as nearly all of the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area.<sup>46</sup> It was also this Act of Congress that formally designated ninety-three percent of the North Cascades National Park as protected wilderness.<sup>47</sup> This relatively new wilderness area surrounds the Stehekin Road, and just like other wilderness roads throughout the region, the road itself is exempted from formal wilderness designation by a 100 foot buffer zone.<sup>48</sup>



The Stehekin Road was not built all at once, rather, it was pushed twenty three miles up-valley from the lake in stages beginning in the late nineteenth century by homesteaders, recreationalists, and, primarily, small-scale mining operations that pre-dated the creation of the national park by nearly seventy-five years. By the 1930s, the Stehekin Road terminated in a spectacular setting at Cottonwood Camp, just below the mining claims at Horseshoe Basin and the glacier-draped walls of Mount Buckner.<sup>49</sup> David Louter summarizes the relationship between the town, its people, and their “road to nowhere” when he writes about what he calls the *Stehekin ideal*—a relationship between nature and modernity that resembled, until recently at least, the original national park vision wherein “members of an industrial society could live in harmony with the natural world.”<sup>50</sup>

A change in weather patterns beginning about 1975 resulted in a switch from smaller-scale spring flooding, to more devastating autumn floods along the Stehekin River, and in 2003 what was described by national park officials as a “500-year flood event” destroyed several portions of the Stehekin Road—both inside and outside the national park boundary.<sup>51</sup> While twelve million dollars’ worth of repairs to the road’s damaged lower section were started in 2012, the upper eight miles of road were closed by national park administrators in 2007 when they determined this section could not be rebuilt without rerouting the demolished grade into the 1988 wilderness boundaries (the final three miles to Cottonwood Camp had already been closed after a similar flood in 1995).

While opportunities for wilderness recreation are enhanced by access, recreation is not, in a strict sense, prevented by the absence of a road. Guidelines for primitive roads in national park units (including national recreation areas) were modified by the National Park Service in 2006 to reflect biocentric thinking in this regard:

Park roads are generally not intended to provide fast and convenient transportation; rather, they are intended to enhance the quality of a visit while providing for safe and efficient travel with minimal or no impacts on natural and cultural resources. For most parks, a road system is already in place. When plans for meeting the transportation needs of these parks are updated, a determination must be made as to whether the road system should be maintained as is, reduced, expanded, reoriented, eliminated, or supplemented by other means of travel.<sup>52</sup>

With this general outline serving as their new mission statement, administrators at North Cascades National Park, in 2007, announced the permanent closure of the Stehekin Road beyond Car Wash Falls—at milepost 12.5—and proposed the wilderness buffer zone on either side of the grade be enclosed by the surrounding Stephen T. Mather Wilderness Area.<sup>53</sup> Yet this decision contradicted a 1988 agreement between national park officials and the residents of Stehekin wherein the National Park Service promised to “provide road maintenance for all designated public roads including the Stehekin Valley Road.”<sup>54</sup>

In fact, efforts to close the upper half of the Stehekin Road on ecological grounds had begun almost immediately after the compromises necessary to create the North Cascades National Park finally succeeded in 1968. Well-known author Harvey Manning led this effort, both through the North Cascades Conservation Council, and through his books—the most popular being the *100 Hikes* series co-authored along with Ira Spring. While Ira’s photographs revealed spectacular mountain vistas, Manning was largely responsible for the guidebook’s prose, and he consistently used the series as a soapbox to agitate for closure of the Stehekin Road—as well as wilderness roads elsewhere. Even as he described the splendors and trailheads that were then-accessible in the Stehekin Valley, he often wrote using the language of radical environmentalism: “The environmentalist coalition that fought for and won the North Cascades National Park in 1968 sought to have the stock-promotion Cascade River and Stehekin River

roads shortened in order to return Cascade Pass to relatively deep wilderness. . . . Make no mistake, it will be achieved, one way or another.”<sup>55</sup>

The irony of Manning’s words lie in the fact the he chose his guidebooks as the backdrop to promote his biocentric ideas. Many of his readers questioned the logic of simultaneously promoting outdoor recreation as a form of wilderness advocacy even while condemning the very roads that made access possible for the recreationalists who read and used his books—groups he often mocked or condemned with barbs like “carabiner-clicking peak-baggers.”<sup>56</sup> Sneering at widely leveled charges of hypocrisy and elitism over his anti-road stances—particularly in the Stehekin valley—Manning unflinchingly responded:

An argument is heard that this shortening would deny the splendors of the upper valley to old people. . . . Indeed, it is specifically the road that denies people the splendors of the upper valley. . . . They are not permitted to experience afoot the most transcendent scene in the North Cascades National Park—made so by its freedom from the tyranny of wheels, a sanctuary from the freeway, a shrine of the peaceful slow. Permanent abandonment of the upper road would let visitors walk through the glory.<sup>57</sup>

Of course, Manning never clarified how the old or disabled would “walk” ten miles (twenty, round trip) along a decommissioned road to see the glories he described. Instead he went on: “Nature takes offense at the existence of the roads, as demonstrated by the Stehekin River’s latest fit of pique. Rather than pouring millions of taxpayer dollars into a war against Nature, it would be much more sensible to make peace, to permanently close the upper portion of the Stehekin River Road.”<sup>58</sup>

Even before the establishment of the North Cascades National Park, Stehekin’s 100 or so residents relied on recreation tourism to support their small economy. The Stehekin Road was the primary generator of this tourism by allowing hikers, climbers, rafters, and sightseers access to nearby wilderness via scheduled shuttle bus service. (Remember, no roads connect Stehekin to the outside world, therefore the only private cars found in the valley belong to the few residents

who live there.) So it is not surprising that a majority of the town's residents were angered by the Park Service's decision in 2007 to permanently close the upper Stehekin Road. A local coalition calling itself "Stehekin Choices" soon formed to lobby for a reversal of the park administration's decision, and rally against what it saw as urban elitism driving national park policy and encroaching upon a rural town's unique heritage.

A small but energetic letter-writing campaign ensued between 2007 and 2011. Terry Lavender of Stehekin wrote to Congressman Doc Hastings and Senator Cantwell: "We are talking about a very few miles of dirt road that allowed very limited traffic and opened an incredible world to many of us. This road is also important to the identity and existence of the Stehekin Community. Closing this road results in less than 20 acres being designated Wilderness and yet it effectively shuts out the majority of visitors who used the Park."<sup>59</sup> Darryl and Betty Wilsey, also from Stehekin, wrote to State Senator Linda Evans Parlette: "The Stehekin Valley Road is the life blood of the Stehekin Valley. It contains the history of the area from back into the 1800's. It allowed people to use the valley for all types of purposes, which has been reduced to recreation only. Let us not lose this last portion of our history."<sup>60</sup>

A somewhat different perspective also emerged from a letter written by three local fire commissioners to Congressman Hastings: "As commissioners of the newly formed Chelan County Fire District #10, we are writing to request that you support legislation that would reestablish the Stehekin Valley road to Cottonwood with no net loss of wilderness. This road provides critical access for fire suppression and is, therefore, critical to the health and safety of residents of our small community."<sup>61</sup> Stehekin residents Tom and Liz Courtney wrote: "Closing the road to vehicle use is out of the question. I know it has to be considered, but it would mean that the National Park area is closed to the very young, the middle aged to elder, the handicap,

the weekend visitor, which means the area is set aside for a very elite few, which is not the purpose of a National Park.”<sup>62</sup> Finally, Seattle resident Jerrod Stafford sided with the locals in Stehekin when he wrote to Senator Cantwell, “The beauty and natural splendor of the entire upper valley is now unavailable to the average weekend adventurer. What used to take a day would now require multiple days or weeks. What used to be available to the handicapped is now not within reach.”<sup>63</sup>

Manning and his North Cascades Conservation Council saw things differently. In the book that defined their mission—*Wilderness Alps: Conservation and Conflict in Washington’s North Cascades*—Manning goaded Stehekin residents who supported maintaining the valley road by calling them “prophets of nullification in the tradition of John C. Calhoun.”<sup>64</sup> He went on, in fact, to accuse Stehekin residents of harboring a secessionist intent, acting “like children yelling at adults,” and of being “Heritaggers”—a reference to the conservative Heritage Foundation.<sup>65</sup> Of course, none of Manning’s rants were particularly useful—or even true, given the generally eclectic nature of the town and its residents.

What really seems to have galled the North Cascades Conservation Council is an incident that took place in 1991, when Chelan County (in which the town of Stehekin resides) rescinded the quit-claim deed to the valley road that it had handed over to National Park administrators shortly after the formation of the park in 1968—a deed wherein the Park Service had promised to maintain the road in perpetuity. When park administrators balked at their commitment to repair the road after a round of flooding in 1990, county commissioners themselves began issuing repair permits and hired contractors who piled riprap into the river—minus the Environmental Assessment required under NEPA. The NCCC and the National Park Service—along with the Sierra Club and Earth Justice filed a successful suit against the county.<sup>66</sup> But despite winning

their battle against local interests in the Stehekin Valley, the National Park Service did, in fact, repair the road in 1993 per its original commitments. Of course, this would change after the floods of 2003 proved to be too much for the park service budget—and just enough for its biocentric wilderness philosophy.

Ironically, Manning himself provided what may be an accurate portrayal of the battle for the Stehekin River Road when he wrote of “a deeper motive hidden by the surface dust,” and subsequently acknowledged that “the road was less a geographic or economic fact than a political symbol.”<sup>67</sup> This political symbolism represents, at the very least, a battle between localism and centralization. It may, in fact, represent a clash of worldviews that reside well beyond the scope of this thesis but are nevertheless reflected in the battle over wilderness roads.

While the roads at Mount Rainier were planned and built by park administrators *after* the establishment of the national park itself, the Stehekin Road existed long *before* the establishment of the national park and designated wilderness that it now enters. The irony, of course, is that the physical wilderness in both these places existed long before the laws and political inventions that have come to define them. Whether or not the presence of a road somehow nullifies the wilderness it penetrates depends, by and large, on what we mean when we say the word, *wilderness*.<sup>68</sup>

### **Wilderness outside Wilderness Boundaries: The Suiattle River Road**

The debate over roads, access, and wilderness does not necessarily begin at the boundaries defined under the 1964 Wilderness Act. The Suiattle River Valley, on the west side of Washington State’s northern Cascade Mountains, was hit by monstrous floods in autumn of 2003—floods that washed out several sections of one of the most popular outdoor recreation access roads in the region. The 23 mile road does not lie within any designated wilderness

boundaries; rather, it provides access to the edge of the 573,000 acre Glacier Peak Wilderness Area—the largest designated wilderness area in the Pacific Northwest.<sup>69</sup> Since the Suiattle River Road does not penetrate or abut any designated wilderness areas, the battle that has been waged over its repair is, on one hand, somewhat surprising. On the other hand, when we consider the myriad types of wilderness recreation that this road provides access *to*, then the motivations of biocentric wilderness advocates become easier to understand. In other words, *designated* wilderness remains a legal construct—captured territory in an ongoing war against modernity—but the biocentric vision of wilderness does not necessarily limit itself to captured territory.

Before the arrival of whites, the Suiattle River Valley was inhabited by Sauk and Suiattle people who used both the river itself, and a footpath over the Cascade Mountains to connect with tribes in the Chelan area on the east side of the range.<sup>70</sup> With its broad and forested low elevation valley, the Suiattle River drainage was heavily logged beginning in the early 1900s and a road was incrementally built beginning around 1913.<sup>71</sup> As land which fell under the control of the U.S. Forest Service’s “multiple use” mandate, resource extraction was accompanied by the creation of recreation infrastructure in the form of campgrounds and trails—particularly during the 1930s as CCC work programs pushed the Suiattle River Road deeper into the valley. The road eventually ended at milepost 26 near Milk Creek—a stream descending directly from glaciers high on the 10,500-foot Glacier Peak volcano—and it would eventually serve nearly twenty backpacking and equestrian trails by way of seven extremely popular trailheads, including a cross-Cascade Mountain hike and the Pacific Crest Trail.<sup>72</sup>

Even before the Wilderness Act, the Forest Service had, in 1960, declared nearly a half-million acres surrounding Glacier Peak *de facto* wilderness under their “U-regulations”—a proto-wilderness designation promoted by Forest Service employee and Wilderness Society co-

founder Robert Marshall in 1939.<sup>73</sup> In fact, it was precisely the Glacier Peak region that Marshall had in mind when he and his boss—U.S. Forest Service Chief, Ferdinand Silcox—authorized these new regulations, which prohibited timber cutting, summer homes, hotels, resorts, and, of course, road-building in primitive areas on certain forest lands.<sup>74</sup> But when Marshall died the same year, and Silcox a year later, their wilderness proposal was set aside for nearly two decades, and during the interim the lower elevation forests surrounding Glacier Peak itself were heavily logged.

After the 1964 Wilderness Act, the Glacier Peak Wilderness boundaries were expanded slightly to enclose the upper three miles of the Suiattle River Road. Rather than create a road buffer zone on either side of the grade—as managers in national parks were doing—the Forest Service simply barricaded the road at milepost 23, and let the last three miles fall into disrepair.<sup>75</sup>

Between 1974 and 2003, the Suiattle Road was washed out by the nearby river dozens of times—and in at least eight places. (see fig. 3.6) Consequently, the Forest Service spent nearly two million dollars in repair work during this period.<sup>76</sup> During most of this time, the extraction of natural resources (primarily logging) made the maintenance and repair of the road a Forest Service priority. After all, the sale of timber on government lands generated revenue for the federal treasury—ostensibly, at least. However, after severe declines in timber production and a virtual prohibition on old growth logging under Bill Clinton’s Northwest Forest Plan in 1994, the Forest Service began second-guessing the urgency of road repairs along the Suiattle.<sup>77</sup>

There is no doubt that public interest in recreation along the river remained high after most of the logging trucks had departed. In fact, the Forest Service’s own 2010 Environmental Assessment of the road and its proposed repairs summarized the diversity of recreational opportunities along the route as follows:



Prior to the flood damage in 2003 . . . the Suiattle Road 26 was a high use, multi-seasonal administrative and recreational route on the Darrington Ranger District. Forest Service facilities in the area accessed by Road 26 . . . include Buck Creek and Sulphur Creek Campgrounds, Suiattle Guard Station cabin rental, Green Mountain Horse Pasture, seven trailheads, and two lookouts. Road 26 is also a major portal to the Glacier Peak Wilderness and the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT) and for commercial guiding and river rafting. The roads are also used for other dispersed recreation including scenic driving, gathering mushrooms, berries, and other forest products, hunting, fishing, and snow play. Forest Service staff use Road 26 for access to recreation sites and facilities, law enforcement, fire patrols, and resource management and monitoring. The road is used by tribal members to access tribal cemeteries, an existing tribal allotment, and the exercise of treaty rights and practices of ceremonial and religious significance.<sup>78</sup>

Given the popularity of the Suiattle River Road—and its location well outside designated wilderness boundaries—it came as a surprise to many outdoor recreationalists how hard biocentric environmental groups would fight to prevent the repair and reopening of the grade to private automobiles beyond the washout at milepost 12. Because of this ongoing battle, the upper eleven miles of the Suiattle Road has remained off-limits to private cars for nearly ten years while the battle over its fate rages on.

The North Cascades Conservation Council—which led the fight to create the Glacier Peak Wilderness in the early 1960s, and the adjacent North Cascades National Park in 1968—was the organization most vocally opposed to repair of the Suiattle Road. Led once again by Harvey Manning, the group lobbied heavily for the permanent closure of the road to car traffic beyond the washout. When the Forest Service balked, they demanded a detailed Environmental Assessment under NEPA. With no wilderness boundaries at stake, objections to repairing the road centered on salmon migration patterns in the river itself, adherence to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, the cutting of old growth trees that would be required for a small reroute, and concerns about the disturbance of migratory birds in the area.

Wilderness recreationalists suspected another motive, however: elitism. Public comments poured in during the required scoping process, and 90% of the respondents favored

repair of the road and restoration of auto access.<sup>79</sup> While the Mountaineers club straddled the fence over the issue and refused to take a firm position one way or the other, the Washington Trails Association—the same advocacy group supporting road closure along the Dosewallips—came out strongly in favor of Suiattle Road repair: “The Suiattle River is a critically important access route into the Glacier Peak Wilderness, and we at WTA have long mourned the loss of this road. We know many of our members and readers . . . have eagerly awaited these repairs. We feel strongly that this route is worthy of being rebuilt.”<sup>80</sup>

Shortly after the Forest Service had completed its favorable assessment in the fall of 2010, recreationalists celebrated as repair work on the Suiattle Road finally got underway. But this work was promptly halted when the North Cascades Conservation Council, along with a local chapter of the National Audubon Society and the Western Environmental Law Center filed a lawsuit claiming that the Forest Service’s Environmental Assessment was inadequate.

Specifically, their complaint alleged the following:

The proposed project would destroy mature and old growth forests that are home to numerous federally listed threatened species, including the northern spotted owl and the marbled murrelet. The road project would also devastate portions of the Suiattle River, a designated ‘Scenic’ river, which is protected habitat for many fish species . . .”<sup>81</sup>

The Federal Highways Administration—the agency brought in by the Forest Service to complete the actual repair work—promptly withdrew from the project over concern that the cost of defending the plan in court could potentially amount to more than the \$5 million project itself.<sup>82</sup>

Well known Seattle newspaper columnist and hiker, Joel Connelly, blasted biocentric environmentalists in three separate editorials in 2011 and 2012. The first was published with a parody aimed squarely at the North Cascades Conservation Council: “Thanks for Saving Washington’s wild places—now stay out.”<sup>83</sup> He went on to write:

Several venerable conservation groups, which once publicized wild places, now work on a broad scale to block or keep closed routes giving access to our scenic backcountry. . . . How can they make a case for protecting places while at the same time seeking to keep people out of parks and wilderness already protected?<sup>84</sup>

Another essay, penned by Connelly after the filing of the NCCC and Audubon lawsuit, was titled: “Greens want bigger national park: Let people into it!”<sup>85</sup> Why, Connelly asked, would outdoor recreationalists consider once again joining forces with biocentric environmental groups to expand wilderness, as they did in the 1960s, if the end result was to be eviction? Connelly wrote, “since the era of David Brower’s leadership of the Sierra Club in the 1950’s, conservationists have been pigeonholed as elitists, disconnected from the interests of the hoi polloi. The stereotype is just that, a broadside sadly given renewed vigor whenever greenie pressure groups lobby against access.”<sup>86</sup> Finally, Connelly asked his readers a question that brushes closely against the core of this thesis: “How can you hope to build support for expanding a national park when keep-everybody-out-but-us greens are trying to block access to a nearby protected area they helped create?”<sup>87</sup>

Connelly’s question about building support for park expansion refers to proposed additions to the North Cascades National Park—an idea put forth by a coalition of environmental groups led by the NCCC, and collectively calling itself the *American Alps Legacy Project*. Their proposal would enclose a portion of the Glacier Peak Wilderness Area—as well as the Ross Lake and Lake Chelan National Recreation Areas—into the national park system. (see fig. 3.8.) Clearly sensitive to the growing rift with recreationalists and the public at large, this group professes to hold a middle ground—even while using ambiguous language:

American Alps is committed to a community-based approach to conservation. Partnering with other conservation and recreation groups will strengthen park advocacy. Carefully assessing the land (i.e., ground truthing) and obtaining background information on alternative land uses and values will strengthen the park proposal. Building bridges with economic interests and addressing the concerns of other stakeholders will facilitate broad

community support for park completion. Securing public feedback on the park proposal will help mobilize support for change. All of these are in our plan of action.<sup>88</sup>

It is not clear from their writing what, exactly, constitutes “ground truthing,” but traditional recreational activities in these areas—including hunting, mountain biking, boating, downhill skiing, climbing anchors, and even the company of dogs on trails—would be prohibited.

Still, advocates for park expansion claim that nearby communities—like Stehekin, Darrington, Winthrop, Mazama, and Marblemount—would reap an economic windfall in the form of increased recreation tourism. According to American Alps Legacy Project supporters, “The North Cascades National Park is one of the least visited national parks in the lower 48 states. [Our] economic study clearly demonstrates that bringing the park to the people and creating new attractions for families will dramatically increase park visitation and economic benefits for local businesses.”<sup>89</sup> Exactly how additional restrictions on wilderness use that accompany national park designation will increase public use at a low-visitation park—one that has clearly become a showcase for biocentric preservation—remains to be seen. What’s more, support among residents in these same communities for an expanded North Cascades National Park is tepid—at best.

An east-side group calling itself “NOPE”—No Park Expansion—has begun a letter-writing and information campaign aimed at reminding the public about past betrayals by ecology-minded preservationists—including the NCCC’s fight to limit access to both the Stehekin and the Suiattle River roads.<sup>90</sup> In fact, the debate over both the Suiattle and the Stehekin roads has resulted in a noticeable loss of support for expanding wilderness preservation from outdoor recreationalists throughout the region. Likewise, it is noteworthy that the localism which has, for nearly a century, brought together chambers of commerce and outdoor recreationalists in the name of preservation and the creation of new national parks seems to have turned against the

ecological wilderness ideal. This is, in no small part, due to the dogmatism of biocentric preservationist groups like the NCCC in the post-Wilderness Act era.

It is important to keep the park expansion proposal in mind when considering a recent and surprising exception to the aforementioned dogmatism. The Wilderness Society—perhaps *the* most anti-road environmental organization in the United States—recently came out in favor of repairing the Suiattle River Road:

The Wilderness Society views the full restoration as imperative; anything less will favor the wishes of a few over the desire of the many. We firmly believe to create future stewards of our public resources we must provide the opportunity for people to experience the wild places that will inspire them to care—the Suiattle offers such an opportunity.<sup>91</sup>

Nowhere does the Wilderness Society’s statement mention the park expansion proposal. Still, their position is so at odds with their mission that it does, in fact, seem to hint at ulterior motives. Likewise, it seems at odds with their history—specifically, their statement’s acquiescence to the “desire of the many” juxtaposed against Wilderness Society co-founder Bob Marshall’s thesis on wilderness as a minority right.<sup>92</sup> More optimistically, perhaps the dogmatism of the past thirty or so years is waning within certain biocentric organizations.

Whatever their motivations, the Wilderness Society’s support for public recreation along the Suiattle River in the form of road access is certainly pragmatic. Whether this pragmatism is truly based upon the desire to create “opportunity for people to experience the wild places that will inspire them to care,” or whether it is aimed at breaking down anthropocentric recreation’s resistance to the North Cascades Park expansion proposal is relevant only if something more than a temporary marriage of convenience is at hand. In other words, at least one biocentric organization has offered an olive branch to anthropocentric wilderness recreationists. In the case of the Suiattle Road, it seems likely that only future washouts will validate this gesture.

In late 2012, the Forest Service issued a FONSI—a finding of no significant impact in their final Environmental Assessment—and decided to move forward with repairs to the Suiattle Road despite the North Cascades Conservation Council’s pending lawsuit. No judges have issued stays, and barring any additional legal action, repairs will begin in the spring of 2013. It appears at this time that the Suiattle River Road will be reopened to recreationalists and their cars by the summer of 2014.<sup>93</sup>

### **A Big Misunderstanding?**

In 2009, retired Governor and United States Senator Daniel J. Evans, author of the 1988 Washington Parks Wilderness Act that declared 93% of the North Cascades National Park designated wilderness—including the Stephen Mather Wilderness which surrounds the Stehekin Road—testified before Congress about what he views as serious misperceptions regarding wilderness and roads:

It was my intent to ensure that undue development would not occur within those national parks. I also recognized that access to trails and vistas within those parks was vital and carefully excluded those road rights-of-way from wilderness boundaries. Normally, road reconstruction and minor relocation would be accommodated within these 100 foot right of ways but on rare occasions natural catastrophes could require modification of wilderness boundaries to allow road relocations. It was my intent when I sponsored the Park Wilderness Bill of 1988 to protect the unique features of these splendid Parks but not to make access more difficult for those seeking the unusual experience of a wilderness park. If we make access substantially more difficult we reduce the number of visitors and ultimately the numbers of citizens and taxpayers who know enough about these parks to want to protect them.<sup>94</sup>

Senator Evans’ testimony indicates that public visitation remains a valid component of wilderness preservation and protection. And wilderness visitation, by definition, is an anthropocentric utility.

This chapter has examined charges of elitism that have now plagued wilderness advocates for nearly a century—a label first applied to preservation-minded recreational

“purists” in the 1920s, and to biocentric preservationists since the 1960s and 70s. In fact, the three case-studies we examined—the Dosewallips, the Stehekin, and the Suiattle—all seem to lend themselves the notion that anti-road, biocentric preservationists are now firmly in possession of the mantle of elitism. But if we take a look at these same three roads through the eyes of the general public, then the elitism brand becomes easy to attach to *both* sides. This is to say, the vast majority of tax-paying citizens will never use any of the roads that are topic in this thesis, much less go on an overnight or multi-day wilderness backpacking adventure.

Consider that the Forest Service’s “preferred alternative” for the repair of the Suiattle Road, set to begin in 2013, will cost American taxpayers more than five million dollars—not to mention the cost of renewed and ongoing road maintenance.<sup>95</sup> And the preferred alternative for the Dosewallips Road—now on hold for the foreseeable future—will cost the federal treasury nearly \$4 million, with an additional \$35,940 in annual maintenance if it is ever reopened.<sup>96</sup> Finally, the Stehekin Road: its lower section in the Lake Chelan Recreation Area will cost taxpayers \$12 million to repair, and its upper section—the portion inside the national park that is now permanently closed—has not even been assessed by administrators at North Cascades National Park.<sup>97</sup> Given the large sums of taxpayer money being directed toward or requested on behalf of the wilderness endeavors of a select few—those with the financial wherewithal and leisure time to recreate in wilderness—it seems fair to suppose that the label of elitism is expansive enough to cover both ecologists and recreationalists alike.

To be fair, in 1996 outdoor recreationalists began paying for the privilege of using Forest Service roads and, more specifically, for parking their cars at trailheads. The “Fee Demonstration Program” required that users of public lands purchase a \$30 annual permit (or pay a \$5 day-use fee) with the proceeds going toward the maintenance of recreation

infrastructure including restrooms, primitive campgrounds, trail maintenance, and, of course, roads.<sup>98</sup> By 2002, the program was raising \$175 million dollars in annual revenue, with \$159 million going toward actual maintenance projects.<sup>99</sup> The fee program was formally enacted into law as the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act in 2004, and a joint report to Congress submitted by the Departments of Interior and Agriculture in 2012 recently attempted to address issues of taxpayer equity:

Fee retention authority is based on the concept that visitors to recreation sites who take advantage of the amenities and services should pay more to maintain those amenities and services than the general public. Without fee collection authority, American taxpayers who do not visit recreation sites would pay just as much as those who visit the sites and avail themselves of amenities. Since 1996, over \$2.5 billion in recreation fees have been reinvested in thousands of recreation-related projects at agency sites.<sup>100</sup>

While recreationalists have grudgingly paid this fee for more than fifteen years, their financial contributions to anthropocentric wilderness access in the form of road maintenance and repairs appears to have had little effect on decisions regarding the repair of the roads in question here.

One of the goals of this chapter has been to learn whether the debate over biocentric and anthropocentric visions of wilderness and roads changes as we look at more contemporary examples of the conflict—and in different places. The answer, in short, is *no*. In fact, we find three outcomes to the debate over roads and wilderness that closely mirror the outcomes we found at Mount Rainier. Like the Carbon River Road, the Upper Stehekin has been permanently closed. And like the Mowich Lake Road, the Suiattle will soon be reopened to wilderness recreationalists, campers, and tourists alike. Finally, in the same way that Rainier's West Side Road remains in a sort of stasis, so too does the fate of the Dosewallips—albeit for different reasons.

There are issues surrounding each of these roads that render the debates over their respective fates far more complex than questions of recreation versus ecology, anthropocentrism



versus biocentrism, or the utility of wilderness versus its intrinsic worth. Understanding these issues requires examination of an even bigger question—one that needs to be answered before any resolution to the debate over roads and access to wilderness can be considered: the meaning of the word “wilderness.”

## Chapter 4

### Wilderness? What Wilderness?

The emphasis on big wilderness reflects a romantic frontier belief that one hasn't really gotten away from civilization unless one can go for days at a time without encountering another human being. By teaching us to fetishize sublime places and wide open country, these peculiarly American ways of thinking about wilderness encourage us to adopt too high a standard for what counts as natural.

--William Cronon in "The Trouble with Wilderness"

#### Introduction

The roads that have served as the case studies for this thesis all provide access to, or penetrate managed wilderness. That these two words—*managed* and *wilderness*—appear together so often ought to provoke no small degree of thought. After all, each is the antithesis of the other. Nevertheless, when used together they represent the existing state of affairs in our national parks and wilderness areas. Toward the purpose of clarifying this linguistic curiosity, the first goal of this chapter will be to examine the history of wilderness and how it has been transformed from *wild* to *managed*. This will require not only an exploration of wilderness etymology, but also an examination of how human perceptions of nature have changed as we have moved through the eras of mysticism, philosophy, and science.

There is no shortage of new research on the topic of wilderness, and recent scholarship undertaken by environmental historians is particularly useful toward demonstrating that the wilderness we take for granted—both in our discourse and in our minds—is not what we believe it to be. Specifically, it is not *pristine*—nor has it been for a very long time. Neither is its interpretation the exclusive purview of the biosciences—a narrative that ecologists have successfully promoted since at least 1964. Wilderness is *cultural* too, and a more complete

understanding of human history as it relates to the environment lends itself well to the debate over its utility. For purposes here, of course, this utility takes on the form of recreation and the roads that allow relatively easy access into the heart of what is, in reality, a much-modified “wilderness.”

This examination of changing values is important in understanding the wilderness that surrounds our roads at Mount Rainier, Olympic, Glacier Peak, and in the North Cascades—particularly in determining whether or not these places are really as pristine as we believe them to be. Even more provocatively, questions about whether these places are truly wilderness *at all* should be considered—not just within the context of the culturally-driven environmental history discourse, but within the very definitions articulated by original biocentric thinkers like Robert Marshall and Aldo Leopold. Finally, a discussion of whether purity is a valid test for contemporary wilderness will inform arguments over whether the land Americans have set aside as national parks and wilderness areas should be *managed* as public parks—or as biological reserves.

### **The Meaning of Wilderness in Historical Context**

As early as 1967—only three years after a legal definition was codified in the Wilderness Act—scholars began to question the etymology of wilderness. Roderick Nash wrote famously, “while the word is a noun it acts like an adjective.” He continued, “Wilderness, in short, is so heavily freighted with meaning of a personal, symbolic, and changing kind as to resist easy definition.”<sup>1</sup> But semantics are not all that troubles wilderness. Human perceptions of wilderness in the post-enlightenment era have changed to such a degree that they now represent a complete reversal of our prior relationship with nature. In other words, the wilderness human beings once feared, or even despised, is now the wilderness they desire. William Cronon describes the human

perception of wilderness in antiquity and through the Middle Ages as “a place to which one came only against one’s will, and always in fear and trembling. Whatever value it might have arose solely from the possibility that it might be ‘reclaimed’ and turned toward human ends—planted as a garden, say, or a city upon a hill. In its raw state, it had little or nothing to offer civilized men and women.”<sup>2</sup> Certainly, this is not the vision of wilderness held by ecologists *or* recreationalists in the post-Wilderness Act era.

With the coming of the European Enlightenment—followed soon by the industrial revolution, the advent of rote labor, and the growing concentration of workers in urban areas—perceptions of wilderness began to undergo a transformation. Nash conveys this early change in wilderness values: “Wilderness appealed to those bored or disgusted with man and his works. It not only offered an escape from society but also was an ideal stage for the romantic individual to exercise the cult that he frequently made of his own soul.”<sup>3</sup> In fact, many of the romantic ideals associated with wilderness can be traced to Immanuel Kant’s 1790 *Critique of Judgment* and his articulation of *sublime* nature.<sup>4</sup> This proto-appreciation of wilderness, in short, “encompassed awe, terror and exaltation.”<sup>5</sup> While terror would remain a part of the human-wilderness calculus for centuries to come, Enlightenment thinking was enabling a limited appreciation of something not human-created.

This era of wilderness reevaluation also coincided with the rise of capitalism and a radical restructuring of the longstanding feudal order in Europe—particularly in regard to land ownership. Published in 1690, John Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government* celebrated the privatization—the *enclosure*—of the commons and attached the relatively new notion of private land ownership to productive work. Of course, Locke could not have foreseen how arguments

over land ownership would play themselves out more than three hundred years later, but it seems almost prescient that his chapter on property includes the following prose:

God gave the world to men in common; but since he gave it them for their benefit and the greatest conveniences of life they were capable to draw from it, it cannot be supposed he meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the industrious and rational—and labor was to be his title to it—not to the fancy or covetousness of the quarrelsome and contentious.<sup>6</sup>

In many respects, the contemporary concept of *public* land runs counter to Locke's enlightenment capitalist values—particularly as these values apply to large national parks and wilderness areas. It seems ironic that the coming *American* corollary to Locke's thesis would, by the late nineteenth century, attempt to insulate wilderness from the capitalism it otherwise embraced by establishing this new type of commons.

The American experience with wilderness is firmly rooted in John Locke's work-nature relationship and, more specifically, in Manifest Destiny. John Gast's 1872 painting, *American Progress*, epitomizes the zenith of this relationship perfectly: Indians flee a Bible-clutching angel as she guides pioneer wagons westward and strings out telegraph lines behind her. (see figure 4.1) But with the closing of America's frontier only twenty years later, public nostalgia for wild places reconciled itself with capitalism in the form of "worthless lands" arguments for preservation via the national park movement—the same argument that would soon accommodate the grand compromise at the heart of the establishment of Mount Rainier National Park in 1899.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, national parks proved to be not at all worthless to capitalism, which readily found a way to reconcile its order with American wilderness in the form of commercial tourism and, much later, outdoor recreation. Nash notes this early reconciliation of capitalism and preservation—one which was codified in law after the passage of the Organic Act in 1916: "by the twentieth century's second decade something of a divide had passed. Sufficient misgivings

about the effects of civilization had arisen to encourage a favorable opinion of wilderness that contrasted sharply with American attitudes.”<sup>8</sup>

The relationship between American capitalism and wilderness is so complex that its nuances have led to wildly differing historical interpretations. Still, Carl Talbot succinctly summarizes it when he refers to the fate of American national parks and wilderness as *museumized nature*: “As capitalism reordered human geography and social relations, and revolutionized productive and economic relations, so it reordered space for its purpose. Thus nature was organized so as to meet the spatial, economic, and psychological needs of capitalism.”<sup>9</sup> One of these needs, of course, manifested itself in the form of wilderness recreation. Paul Sutter confirms this much less-understood relationship between capitalism, preservation, and outdoor recreation when he writes: “Many have argued that the popularity of outdoor recreation and the growth of preservationist sentiment were less progressive intellectual developments than they were consumer trends, part and parcel of the cultural tectonics of the last century of so.”<sup>10</sup>

If we accept that the usurpation of the wilderness preservation movement by capitalism took on the form of outdoor recreation—particularly in the post-World War II era—then contrary to what many believe, capitalism itself may have been a sort of silent partner in efforts leading up to the passage of the Wilderness Act. And if this is true, then perhaps many of the post-modernist, counter-cultural tendencies of wilderness supporters in the last half of the twentieth century were little more than well-disguised manifestations of capitalism.

Michael Pollan has noted, however, that a sort of sectionalism remains at the core of the capitalism-wilderness paradox when he writes, “[e]ssentially, we have divided our country in two, between the kingdom of wilderness, which rules about eight percent of America’s land, and

the kingdom of the market, which rules the rest.”<sup>11</sup> This analysis seems to hold up locally as well when we consider that Harvey Manning, in a 1996 interview, was asked for a list of his “greatest fears.” His unflinching response: “free enterprise.”<sup>12</sup> Whatever the relationship between capitalism and wilderness is today, it was Aldo Leopold who first noted a growing anomie that was turning wilderness recreation into a refuge from a rapidly-changing post-war society when he wrote in 1949: “recreation has become a self-destructive process of seeking but never quite finding, a major frustration of a mechanized society.”<sup>13</sup>

Biocentrists argue that whether or not the nature they fight to protect from the American system is truly pristine, Wilderness Act *law* is now the starting point for any arguments over its fate. To be sure, the Wilderness Act of 1964, in Section 2c, defines wilderness as “an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man,” and “where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” What’s more, this same section of the Act describes wilderness as a place with “the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable,” with “opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation,” and that is “of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition.” But it goes on to describe wilderness as a place which “may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.”<sup>14</sup> When wilderness is subjected to all of the above definitions, it becomes reasonable to question the dominant role that biocentric ecologists have held as its interpreters since 1964—particularly since the Act’s own words clearly assign a cultural role for the *interpretation* of wilderness.

In the 1990s, social scientists began a scholarly-driven attempt to wrest a portion of the wilderness debate away from the exclusive realm of ecology. William Cronon, widely regarded as the leader of this effort, in 1992 described the role that environmental history would come to

play in the debate: “The special task of environmental history is to tell stories that carry us back and forth across the boundary between people and nature to reveal just how culturally constructed that boundary is—and how dependent on natural systems it remains.”<sup>15</sup>

While early localized efforts to resist biocentric interpretations of wilderness—such as the public outcry over the 1973 Rainier Master Plan—were largely reflexive, more intellectually-based challenges to the biocentric orthodoxy of the post-Wilderness Act era began to grow louder by the mid-1990s. These challenges were brought to the fore with a 1996 essay by Cronon titled “The Trouble with Wilderness.” Noting many of the same issues as Nash, Cronon complained of what he referred to as the “edenic narrative” practiced by biocentric ecologists. Wilderness, he declared, “had once been the antithesis of all that was orderly and good—it had been the darkness, one might say, on the far side of the garden wall—and yet now it was frequently likened to Eden itself.”<sup>16</sup> But Cronon would raise howls among “Greens” as he proceeded to present a broad-brushed critique of modern environmentalism and its dogmatic interpretation of wilderness. Toward this end, he wrote: “Much of the moral authority that has made environmentalism so compelling as a popular movement flows from its appeal to nature as a stable external source of nonhuman values against which human actions can be judged without ambiguity.”<sup>17</sup> And in more scathing language, he went on: “Although wilderness may today seem to be just one environmental concern among many, it in fact serves as the foundation for a long list of other such concerns that on their face seem quite removed from it. This is why its influence is so pervasive and, potentially, so insidious.”<sup>18</sup>

Cronon’s essay interpreted the American experience with wilderness in a way that outraged many preservationists. This is not surprising, since his piece called into question the very narrative that biocentrists had so carefully cultivated for more than half a century. While not



necessarily dismissing the concerns of the ecologically-minded, he clearly set out to deny them any favorable alliance with history when he blasted the Edenic narrative of wilderness:

There is nothing natural about the concept of wilderness. It is entirely a creation of the culture that holds it dear, a product of the very history it seeks to deny. Indeed, one of the most striking proofs of the cultural invention of wilderness is its thoroughgoing erasure of the history from which it sprang. In virtually all of its manifestations, wilderness represents a flight from human history.<sup>19</sup>

On one hand, biocentric interpretations of the Wilderness Act certainly *do* deny a history of wilderness that is full of human stories. The supreme example, of course, is that the designated wilderness areas codified in the Act have served, in almost all instances, as legal eviction notices for indigenous peoples.

Environmental historians Baird Callicott and Michael Nelson make this point even more forcefully when they note plainly: “The first criticism of the wilderness idea was voiced by those upon whom it was imposed and those whom it dispossessed.”<sup>20</sup> Here, they allude to one of the oldest fallacies in American lore: that pre-Columbian wilderness existed in a pristine state. In fact, even before the arrival of Europeans, Indians had inhabited the Americas for nearly nine thousand years, and they had already left an indelible imprint on the wilderness in which they lived. Deliberately setting fires to clear land for game hunting was a common practice, and these clearings are still evident in many parts of the Pacific Northwest. In fact, Indians lived upon, or regularly hunted and gathered in all of the places named in this thesis. So it is certainly reasonable to ask why they have been driven from their millennial haunts and torn from their traditions—not only in the parklands surrounding Mount Rainier, but in the places now designated as wilderness on the Olympic Peninsula and in the North Cascades. Again, Cronon blasts the pristine wilderness narrative: “The removal of Indians to create an ‘uninhabited wilderness’—uninhabited as never before in the human history of the place—reminds us just how inverted, just how constructed, the American wilderness really is.”<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, strictly cultural interpretations of wilderness run the risk of applying modernist human history to *relatively* pristine wilderness in a context that fails to consider the recent exponential growth of humanity and the pressure it has placed upon even the most durable ecosystems. In his famous essay to *Science* in 1968, Garrett Hardin wrote in “The Tragedy of the Commons” about wilderness in the context of national parks management: “Plainly, we must soon cease to treat the parks as commons or they will be of no value to anyone.”<sup>22</sup>

Anthropocentric interpretations of wilderness may also be guilty of failing to consider the possibility that humanity is, in fact, passing into an ill-defined post-modern era. If this is true, it might explain the trouble that contemporary wilderness now finds itself immersed in. As early as 1967, Lynn White wrote of what he called “The Historic Roots of our Ecological Crisis.” This crisis, he noted, was “the product of an emerging, entirely novel, democratic culture.”<sup>23</sup> The next two sentences in his quote, however, reflect an expression that lies at the core of the anti-capitalist critique: “The issue is whether a democratized world can survive its own implications. Presumably we cannot unless we rethink our axioms.”<sup>24</sup> Still, it seems fair to note that the global population has *doubled* since Hardin and White issued their critiques, and capitalism remains an expression of both economic freedom and individual liberty that is growing in popularity. And so far—in America, at least—capitalism arguably continues to accommodate our collective (and perhaps flawed) notions of wilderness.

Whether wilderness represents a flight from human history or a valid expression of changing values has a direct bearing on its contemporary utility. Here, the task remains one of ascertaining whether its utility is anthropocentric or biocentric. If it is the former, then the roads that provide easy access to nature may represent a validation of the status quo. But if it is the latter, then the post-modern era may, in fact, have a foothold in the areas we now call wilderness.

Either way, we must decide if a historically informed definition of wilderness can be reconciled with changing values on the roads and in the places we have used here as case studies.

### **Arguments for Wilderness as a Public Park**

In the same way modern legal scholars often look for constitutional insight in *The Federalist* essays of Madison, Hamilton, and John Jay, so too interpreting the Wilderness Act may require an examination of the writings which led up to the 1964 law. For our purposes here, it seems fair to use the published works of Bob Marshall and Aldo Leopold. Marshall, in 1930, defined wilderness as follows:

I shall use the word wilderness to denote a region which contains no permanent inhabitants, possesses no possibility of conveyance by any mechanical means and is sufficiently spacious that a person crossing it must have the experience of sleeping out. But trails and temporary shelters, which were common long before the advent of the white race, are entirely permissible.<sup>25</sup>

Within Marshall's words, it is easy to see that one of the Wilderness Act's key conceptual founders held a spatial vision of wilderness that seems to exclude land capable of accommodating day outings.

Marshall's minimum size requirement is, in fact, found in the Act itself—with caveats. But if his intent is applied rigidly to a national park the size of Mount Rainier, then it becomes reasonable to question whether foundational wilderness thought supports the notion that the meadows and forests around its base fit original intent. Consider that almost no regions of this particular park *require* the foot traveler to set up an overnight camp. Even the 93-mile Wonderland Trail that encircles Rainier itself can be divided into day excursions from various ingress and egress points along its length. One possible exception now, of course, is on the western edge of the park, where the West Side Road has sat unrepaired and gated since 1989. Still, even here a very fit hiker could cover the 25-mile distance between the trailheads at

Mowich Lake and Dry Creek in a long day—and the bicycles that now travel upon its closed grade undoubtedly qualify as “mechanical conveyances.” In fact, the entire Wonderland Trail has been hiked in just over 24 continuous hours, and the climb from Paradise Valley to the mountain’s summit and back is regularly done in a single day.

Similarly, Aldo Leopold promoted a definition of wilderness as “a continuous stretch of country preserved in its natural state, open to lawful hunting and fishing, big enough to absorb two weeks’ pack trip, and kept devoid of roads, artificial trails, cottages, or other works of man.”<sup>26</sup> Here, it is easier to see the problem with contemporary wilderness interpretations. Hunting, of course, is now prohibited in national park wilderness. Additionally, all of the national parks and wilderness areas in the Cascade and Olympic Mountains are traversed by hundreds upon hundreds of “artificial trails.” What’s more, even if *all* of the roads that have served as case studies for this thesis were permanently closed, Leopold’s two-week rule would, on its own, still nullify the consideration of these places as wilderness. In other words, there are no unbroken wilderness regions in the Cascade or Olympic Mountains that meet Leopold’s definition—even if virtually every primitive road in the Pacific Northwest were gated and locked. While something akin to gerrymandering is required to meld the contemporary definition of wilderness with Marshall’s, Leopold’s core vision clearly does not fit the present paradigm.

Whatever its true definition, the utility found in what we refer to as wilderness serves a critical—a *political* purpose. As stated already, for some citizens wilderness “absorbs” some of the negative aspects of urban life. Nelson notes, “wilderness experience is also said to be a great form of stress relief and serves as a superb pressure release for those living in metropolitan areas.”<sup>27</sup> Likewise, Holmes Rolston III believes that “wildlands absorb a kind of urban negative disvalue . . . and provide a niche that meets deep seated psychosomatic needs.”<sup>28</sup> And again,

even Thoreau attaches a measure of political value to nature: “Our village life would stagnate if it were not for the unexplored forests and meadows which surround it. We need the tonic of wildness . . .”<sup>29</sup>

Of course, none of these quotes necessarily defines wilderness—or specifies what measure of access to it is appropriate. Still, it stands to reason that any temporary escape from a perceived urban malaise requires leisure time—a precious and rare commodity in the modern capitalist system that most of us are bound to. If wilderness is, in fact, an escape valve for disaffected urbanites—a pressure relief valve for capitalism—then convenient access to outdoor recreation via roads and automobiles provides a valuable political service.

Are these disaffected urbanites to whom Nelson and Rolston refer downtrodden, blue-collar wage-earners with limited leisure time? For the most part, the answer is *no*. As early as 1965, Robert Wernick described wilderness recreationalists as “decadents, aristocrats, and snobs.”<sup>30</sup> Cronon expresses similar sentiments with the following question: “Why . . . is the ‘wilderness experience’ so often conceived as a form of recreation best enjoyed by those whose class privileges give them the time and resources to leave their jobs behind and ‘get away from it all’?”<sup>31</sup> To drive this point home, Richard White notes that “environmentalists so often seem self-righteous, privileged, and arrogant because they so readily consent to identifying nature with play and making it by definition a place where leisured humans come only to visit and not to work, stay, or live.”<sup>32</sup> Value judgments notwithstanding, an unusually high percentage of wilderness recreationalists are, in fact, among society’s most privileged and elite. James Turner notes that in a 1991 survey, forty-one percent of backcountry wilderness users claimed a post-graduate education.<sup>33</sup> And it can certainly be said, anecdotally at least, that the backpack worn by

the average wilderness adventurer likely contains hundreds—perhaps *thousands* of dollars’ worth of lightweight, high-tech gear that serves no purpose elsewhere.

Even if wilderness recreation is largely a pursuit of a highly-educated and leisured class, the “escape valve” thesis may still apply—assuming white-collar stress is just as valid as blue. Still, the notion that wilderness represents a temporary means of escape from urban drudgery seems somewhat more valid than the idea that wild nature serves as a respite from capitalism. In fact, for the leisured class, experiential wilderness recreation may be little more than a reified consumer good. Turner notes that “[s]everal participants in the recent wilderness debate have linked the growth in wilderness recreation with consumer culture’s power to repackage nature—refashioning ‘wilderness’ as an accessible and desirable tourist destination.”<sup>34</sup> Sutter makes this same point more plainly:

Consumerism taught Americans to see the world in more possessive and materialistic ways, not only the acquisition of goods, but also in the accumulations of experiences. In this sense, outdoor recreation becomes a consumer activity when it is characterized by consumer habits of mind—when Americans start seeing recreational nature as an experiential commodity.”<sup>35</sup>

The dramatic financial growth of the outdoor equipment industry that began in the 1960s also seems to validate this premise: that seekers of wilderness recreation have become thoroughly immersed in the very capitalism that they often claim to be ambivalent about.

It is interesting to note that legally-defined wilderness—an American invention—is not a valued part of the European experience. Restrictions on recreation imposed by the Wilderness Act (and its related administrative code) in the United States would be considered absurd in most Alpine nations, where unfettered access to mountain scenery, sports, and recreation is more widely practiced. Nash effectively uses the anecdote of Eric Julber—a California attorney and Sierra Club member who held a life-long biocentric vision of wilderness. After visiting Switzerland, however, Julber’s views of wilderness changed dramatically. According to Nash,

“what he discovered was that the Swiss Alps were readily accessible by mechanized conveyances, heavily used by people, and still beautiful and satisfying.”<sup>36</sup>

A system of trails and lightly furnished mountain huts—along with aerial trams, ski lifts, cog railways, mountain tunnels, and well-maintained amenities in many places—make the European mountain experience wholly different than the one now found in America. Julber’s epiphany, according to Nash, resulted in his conversion from a biocentric outlook, to a decidedly anthropocentric one:

Julber was disturbed that his own country’s system of wilderness preservation excluded 99 percent of the people. ‘What,’ he asked, ‘of the too-old, the too-young, the timid, the inexperienced, the frail, the hurried, and the out-of-shape or the just plain lazy? Their taxes, Julber reasoned, acquired and maintained the established wilderness areas but because of the access problem wilderness users tended to be a small, wealthy, young, and leisured elite.’<sup>37</sup>

Of course, no one would claim that the European experience represents pristine nature. And Nash qualifies his story by noting that Julber was likely confusing *scenery* and natural beauty with wilderness.

The conundrum inherent in this anecdote, of course, is that the only way to remedy Julber’s complaint would be to invade American wilderness—or at least our current perception of it—with mechanical conveyances far beyond the primitive roads at the heart of this thesis. Even the vast majority of outdoor recreationalists, whose very lineage stems from the wilderness preservation movement, would not support this. As it stands, it is difficult to determine whether Julber’s “wealthy, young, and leisured elite” who participate in wilderness recreation truly outnumber those who hold a more biocentric vision for wilderness.

Whether the rationale for wilderness as a public park hinges on its own historic foundational context, on a critique of capitalism, or in using comparisons to a European model, the fact remains that wild nature needs advocates. And so the question becomes one of use. In

other words, should those who use wilderness by recreating in it have a bigger say in its fate? Even Dave Foreman, the founder of Earth First!, seems to cede a part of his otherwise unyielding biocentric message when he agrees that access equates to advocacy: “In the final analysis, most areas in the National Wilderness Preservation System and the National Park System were (and are) decreed because they had friends. Conservationists know that the way to protect an area is to develop a constituency for it. We create those advocates by getting them into the area.”<sup>38</sup>

But others aren’t so sure. University of Washington-Tacoma professor, Mark Jenkins, argues that “[m]any, many wilderness boosters claim that simply knowing that there exist designated wilderness areas, regardless of whether or not they ever get to experience such areas, is reason enough for them to want to preserve them.”<sup>39</sup> This argument, it seems, exposes far too many urbanites to the whims of the wilderness narrative—and the side that controls it. By seeing wilderness firsthand, whenever possible, the informed citizen can more effectively differentiate relatively wild nature from the average city park and, hopefully, better participate in conversations about its purpose and its fate.

### **Arguments for Wilderness as an Ecological Reserve**

George Sessions, writing in *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-first Century*, clarifies the difference between a park and wilderness: “A park is a managerial unit definable in quantitative and pragmatic terms. Wilderness is unquantifiable.”<sup>40</sup> It is no secret that many biocentrists lament that *wilderness* has been coopted with the concept of the public park—and many of them take a particularly dim view of outdoor recreationalists. Philosopher Jack Turner even resorts to name-calling:

We hunt for fun, fish for fun, climb for fun, ski for fun, and hike for fun. This is the grim harvest of the ‘fun hog’ philosophy that drove the wilderness recreation boom for the past three decades. Despite the poetics and philosophical rhetoric of environmentalists, there



is little evidence that either the spiritual or scientific concerns of Muir, Thoreau, Leopold, and Muir have trickled down to most wilderness users.<sup>41</sup>

Part of this angst may arise from Deep Ecology—a transcendental ideal closely allied with modern biocentrism. Rather than adherence to strictly empirical tenets, however, the Deep Ecology movement seems to meld all three arenas of human belief—mystical, philosophical, and scientific—into a call for *big wilderness*. Big wilderness, in turn, upholds the original definitions envisioned by both Marshall and Leopold.

Sessions is particularly concerned about adequate space for evolutionary mechanisms to continue working, and he claims that present wilderness areas are not large enough to accommodate naturally selective processes.<sup>42</sup> In this sense, Deep Ecology presents itself as a sort of meta-corollary to frontier nostalgia. In other words, it seems deeply nostalgic on a scale of time that reaches back to the place where mankind left his hunter-gatherer roots for the farm.

Arne Naess, widely regarded as the movement's founder, qualifies the beliefs of Deep Ecology vis-à-vis wilderness recreation: "There is not today, nor was there ever, any essential conflict between humans in moderate numbers and a state of wilderness or wildness. There are reasons today, however, for some areas to be left entirely devoid of human settlement, and for limiting even short carefully arranged visits by scientists to a minimum."<sup>43</sup> And Dave Foreman—heretofore a supporter of the access-equals-advocacy logic—reveals the true nature of his Earth First! beliefs with the following vision of biocentric "compromise": "The core Wilderness Areas would be strictly managed to protect and, where necessary, to restore native biological diversity and natural processes. Traditional Wilderness recreation is entirely compatible, so long as ecological considerations come first."<sup>44</sup>

Naess's dream of total human exclusion from wilderness may already be on the path to realization in places like the Upper Stehekin, where the closure of the road has made human

presence a rare event. Foreman's statement, however, more readily applies to the Carbon River Road, where recent closure seems to be a small step toward his goal of wilderness restoration. Still, if ecological considerations were to hold primacy over wilderness recreation in every instance—as Foreman demands—then it seems clear the rest of the roads in our case studies would remain permanently closed. Reed Noss spells out the practical effects of Foreman's premises on wilderness roads if taken to their logical conclusion: "Roadlessness defines wilderness and is the key to its ecological health. Probably no single feature of human-dominated landscapes is more threatening to biodiversity (aquatic and terrestrial) than roads. Direct effects of roads include fragmentation and isolation of populations, roadkill, pollution, and sedimentation of streams and wetlands, and exotic species invasions."<sup>45</sup>

On one hand, with the inescapable negative environmental effects of primitive roads in mind—not to mention the easy access they afford recreationalists—Mark Woods spells out the essence of the conflict over the human place in nature, and reconfirms the already-mentioned angst between ecology and recreation:

Wilderness enthusiasts demand the right to have wilderness solitude and primitive recreation and leave impacted campsites, mazes of trails, chalk (on rock climbing routes), feces, garbage, and so forth all over wilderness areas. In spite of the logical priority the preservation rationale holds over the recreation rationale, the latter supports trammeling the naturalness of wilderness over preserving such naturalness."<sup>46</sup>

On the other hand, Baird Callicott notes that much of the confusion found at the heart of what he calls *The Great Wilderness Debate* is, in fact, a problem of semantics. His solution:

I suggest we rename wilderness areas 'biodiversity reserves.' That would put patrons on notice that the back country in the national parks and forests doesn't exist primarily for the enjoyment of trekkers, climbers, canoers, campers, and solitude seekers—as wilderness advocates argued from the mid nineteenth to the mid twentieth century—but for the nonhuman inhabitants of such places.<sup>47</sup>

In short, while biocentrists decry both the real and perceived excesses of recreationalists—not to mention the primitive roads that turn biodiversity reserves in to public parks—deep ecologists seem to lament the state of the great wilderness debate on a Meta level.

Jack Turner sums up the roots of this conflict in a manner that reveals the rift which has formed between modern biocentric empiricism and the more philosophical Deep Ecology movement: “Deep ecologists are desperately trying to replace the philosophical foundations of the mechanical model of the world with philosophical foundations of an organic model. The search for foundations—for science, mathematics, logic, or the social sciences—has been the curse of rationalism from Descartes to the present, and the foundations of deep ecology will not exorcise that curse.”<sup>48</sup> It should come as no surprise that Deep Ecology’s appeal has faded during the past decade. Under assault from both empirical biocentrists and culturally-slanted anthropocentrists, the movement seems well on its way to irrelevancy. Guha Ramachandra summarizes this trend best: “To my mind, deep ecology is best viewed as a radical trend within the wilderness preservation movement. . . . advancing philosophical rather than aesthetic arguments and encouraging political militancy rather than negotiation.”<sup>49</sup>

If the debate over wilderness is framed simply as *Public Park versus Ecological Reserve*, then arguments over its fate are likely to rage on for a long time to come. But if the debate is expanded to include the present human condition within a historical context, then it is easier to see how small compromises, at least, might be achieved. While Cronon makes a strong case for a culturally informed compromise, Baird Callicott makes what is, on its face perhaps, the one of the strongest arguments for wilderness as an ecological reserve:

That’s part of what’s wrong with the wilderness label. It pits the politically anemic historic rationale of wilderness preservation (recreation and aesthetics for an elite few) against the politically more robust claims of jobs and profits. Preserving biodiversity is a more universal and higher-minded conservation aim than the provision of outdoor

recreation and monumental scenery—which, with a little help from their spin doctors, Congressional demagogues can make to look like a government-subsidized luxury for social misfits.”<sup>50</sup>

Callicott’s statement probably conveys more than a small degree of truth, but it seems just as easy to turn his premise on its head and propose a solution in the form of broader wilderness participation—a solution, in other words, that looks more like the inclusive European model of wilderness as a public park.

### **To the Root of the Wilderness Problem**

Before hypothesizing about the fate of wilderness roads, it must first be determined if the wilderness they penetrate has value—and, more importantly, what kind of value. *Intrinsic* value is that which is derived from a thing being an end in itself—not, exclusively, the value borne of its utility. David Weissman introduces the reader of *A Social Ontology* to the concept of values by conveying Nietzsche straightaway: “we humans are self-valuing in a world where other things have value only because of their utility”<sup>51</sup> This unabashed anthropocentric declaration—that humans are the exclusive bearers of intrinsic value—contrasts sharply with the views of the Deep Ecology movement and, in some instances, with biocentric ecology. What Nietzsche and Weissman are implying is that wilderness exists only in relation to its instrumental utility and its ability to meet the needs of sentient things—specifically, human beings. Philosophically, their position buttresses the vision of wilderness as a public park. But to be clear, most biocentrists likely subscribe to this notion as well; in fact, many of them believe in the idea of wilderness bioreserves as a utility necessary for *human* survival. Still, while the *instrumental* value of wilderness—whatever its justification—is now the generally accepted ontology, there are several notable challenges to this value premise.

*“In wildness is the preservation of the world.”* Immediately recognizable as a quote from the transcendentalist widely regarded as the originator of American environmental thought, we should also note that Thoreau had this to say about the intrinsic value of wilderness: “The earth is not a mere fragment of dead history, stratum upon stratum like the leaves of a book, to be studied by geologists and antiquaries chiefly, but living poetry like the leaves of a tree . . . not a fossil earth, but a living earth.”<sup>52</sup> If, in our examination of values, we grant overwhelming weight to original thinkers, then intrinsic value for wilderness stands today as it did for Thoreau. It is something much more than a “tonic” that lies just outside the city; rather, it has value that requires no justification.

Similarly, the founder of process philosophy, Alfred North Whitehead, wrote in his 1925 *Science and the Modern World*: “Value is an element which permeates through and through the poetic view of nature. We have only to transfer the very texture of realization in itself that value which we recognize so readily in terms of human life”<sup>53</sup> In fact, it is within Whitehead’s generous philosophy of intrinsic value that the Deep Ecology movement finds its earliest roots.<sup>54</sup> Peter Singer, on the other hand, is willing to assign a nuanced degree of intrinsic value only to higher-ordered animals based on their ability to feel pain—but not to the biosphere in which they reside.<sup>55</sup> Still, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas once went so far as to propose a *Wilderness Bill of Rights* in 1965—a gesture that implicitly speaks for nature’s intrinsic value.<sup>56</sup>

Along these same lines, we find within Aldo Leopold’s *A Sand County Almanac* a chapter thought by many to be one of the most heart-wrenching and beautifully written verses in all of environmental literature: “Thinking like a Mountain.” In it, Leopold alludes to the intrinsic value of wilderness as he looks into the pale green eyes of a mortally wounded wolf: “Only the uneducable tyro can fail to sense the presence or absence of wolves, or the fact that mountains

have a secret opinion about them.”<sup>57</sup> And, of course, Leopold’s *land ethic* is often called the holy grail of environmental thought and it is easy to see intrinsic value woven into his words: “In short, a land ethic changes the role of *Homo Sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it.”<sup>58</sup>

Gary Varner’s *In Nature’s Interests* seems to offer up the most contemporary and balanced critique of the idea that nature is a bearer of intrinsic value. While he admits that he likes the idea of preservation, he abhors the idea that intrinsic value should be attached to nature out of expedience. In his “Critique of Environmental Holism” he shares his inner conflict: “My intuitive judgment is that we ought to give back much of the earth to its wild, nonhuman inhabitants. As a philosopher, I insist only that we be clear about our reasons for doing so. . . I conclude that biocentric individualism deserves another look.”<sup>59</sup> Holmes Rolston III seems to recognize that arguments over the exclusivity of human agency offer limited clarity and, in all likelihood, present no resolution to the debates between anthropocentrists and biocentrists over the instrumental or the intrinsic value of wilderness:

The evolution of rocks into dirt into fauna and flora is one of the great surprises of natural history, one of the rarest events in the astronomical universe. Earth is all dirt, we humans too arise up from the humus, and we find revealed what dirt can do when it is self-organizing under suitable conditions. This is pretty spectacular dirt. Perhaps we do not have to have all the cosmological answers. Nobody has much doubt that this is a precious place, a pearl in a sea of black mystery.<sup>60</sup>

While Rolston’s prose is both compromising and poetic, it certainly does not offer any resolution to the debate over access to wilderness.

The notion of applying intrinsic value to wilderness seems to be, for all intents and purposes, marginally defensible. Nash confronts the belief system that deep ecologists—and many biocentrists—still hold regarding wilderness and intrinsic value:

Giving rights to wilderness is an appealing idea which has proven useful in recruiting supporters for wilderness preservation. But in the political and legal arenas where the

future of wilderness is shaped, it makes a minimal contribution to a philosophy of wilderness. The most effective defenses of wilderness seem to be rooted squarely in the needs and interests of civilized people.<sup>61</sup>

If a resolution to the instrumental-intrinsic debate exists at all, then we need not look any farther than the Northwestern locales discussed in this thesis. Three local authors note that, historically, a melding of instrumental and intrinsic value could once be found on the Olympic Peninsula—near the Dosewallips Road, in fact. In their 1998 essay, “The Value of a River,” Stephen Lansing, Philip Lansing, and Juliet Erazo write about the nearby Skokomish River, and the intertwined fate of the Twana Indians who once lived in harmony with it. The authors describe the river as the *natural capital* of the tribe and a coexistence between man and nature that once resided somewhere between the intrinsic and the spiritual. In doing so, they also describe a state of harmony between humans and nature on the Olympic Peninsula which no longer exists, and they note, much like Rolston, that “the Salmon People, the Elk People, and the other animal species were regarded as sharing a common origin with humanity.”<sup>62</sup>

Similarly, on the opposite side of the Puget Sound Basin, Mount Rainier National Park pays homage to the people who once thrived within its now-gentrified edenic gardens. *Cowlitz* Glacier, *Sluisin* Falls, *Wahpenayo* Peak, *Kalpatche* Park, *Ipsut* Creek, *Mowich* Lake, and, of course, *Tahoma*: these are just a few of the many names applied to natural features that memorialize a people evicted from Mount Rainier’s rivers, forests, and meadows more than a hundred years ago.<sup>63</sup> In this sense, it seems reasonable for us to assign intrinsic value to wilderness only as a museum curiosity—an artifact of our severed relationship with nature that passed into history when we abandoned our hunter-gatherer roots in favor of the farm. *Museumized Nature*. Curiously, the Indian inhabitants of this region were among the last humans on the planet to withdraw their own intrinsic value from the wilderness in which they lived. In an antithetical sense, perhaps the primitive roads that now penetrate our mountain regions represent

an unconscious attempt to resurrect the lost intrinsic value of wilderness using the power of our own human agency.



## Compromises and Conclusions

National Parks, illustrated by Mount Rainier, were cultural constructions of nature, abstract notions made real through use. In the nineteenth century, those notions centered on parks as symbols of America's cultural achievements, selections of the western landscape's most sublime natural icons, which were to be viewed and contemplated. In the early twentieth century, those notions centered on parks increasingly as places for outdoor recreation, enclaves of nature to be reached by and known through machines.

--David Louter in *Windshield Wilderness*

### **An Unbridgeable Divide: Ira Spring's Green Bonding versus Harvey Manning's Wilderness Deeps**

If the gulf that exists between recreation and ecology is unbridgeable, then there is no better evidence than the shattered friendship of Ira Spring and Harvey Manning. Already mentioned in this thesis many times, Spring and Manning fought together for the preservation of wilderness in the mountains of the Pacific Northwest by creating an enormous constituency for it—Ira with his camera, and Harvey with his pen. Beginning in the 1970s, the guidebooks they co-authored introduced countless hikers and backpackers to wilderness, and their publications described not only the trails required to see nature firsthand, but also the roads and driving directions required to reach the trailheads at the start of each hike. While Ira Spring never wavered from the “access-equals-advocacy” spirit of wilderness preservation—what he referred to as “Green Bonding”—it was clear early on that Manning's passion put recreation far behind his ecological concerns. In fact, Manning recalls the very moment of his conversion:

I can recall the precise point at which I stopped being a hiker and climber and became a conservationist. It was on a heather slope high above White Rock Lake. There was beautiful wilderness all around me; lakes, forests, mountain ridges. Suddenly I saw this huge brown blight, an obvious clearcut down by the Suiattle River. I thought, ‘my God, they have gotten this far already. They will take it all if someone doesn't stop them.’<sup>1</sup>

Of course, Manning's subsequent preservation efforts, like Spring's, were in opposition to logging, mining, and other extractive interests that were encroaching on wild places which, at the time, lacked the legal protection of designated wilderness. But much like Leopold, Marshall, and Yard, Harvey Manning's ire would eventually turn against roads—regardless whether their purpose was for resource extraction or for access to the wilderness recreation he and Spring promoted in their books.

John Caldbick, one of Manning's biographers, also notes the shifting wilderness values that led Manning to embrace wilderness as something greater than recreational utility:

“Although he did as much as Ira Spring to open up the backcountry to hordes of day-trippers, and though he also believed in the importance of building a constituency of hikers, Manning eventually came to embrace the more restrictive views pushed by wilderness purists.”<sup>2</sup>

If Manning's epiphany in the Suiattle River Valley informed his subsequent battle against loggers, miners, and motorized ORVs, then one of his earliest steps toward a more restrictive view of wilderness recreation may have been a backpacking trip he took in the 1970s. Hiking completely around Mount Rainier—not along its Wonderland Trail, but *outside* the park's boundaries—Manning discovered first-hand vast areas devastated by logging: “I walked hundreds of miles, sampling a Low Orbit through the stumps, a Wonder-Lost Trail that might yet come to be. . . . It's known to few hikers. Most lack a taste for the stumpcases of Hell, preferring the flower fields of Paradise and thus overcrowding the trails of the Park.”<sup>3</sup> Hence, by the 1990s, Manning seemed to be demanding recreationalists carry with them a “deeper,” biocentric appreciation of wilderness: “It's not enough to go out into the wilderness without appreciating its interconnections and fragility. Ecology, the study of ecosystems, should be the hiker's passion,

not merely to enrich his trail pleasure, but so he can understand the functioning of the systems and how he can fit in unobtrusively.”<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, Manning’s co-author and preservation partner, Ira Spring, held firm to his belief that “Green Bonding” remained a valuable tool for wilderness preservation despite rapidly growing numbers of outdoor recreationalists:

In the 1930s I would have found it impossible to think of 500 people hiking to Lena Lake in one year; however, in 1995 there were 10,000, and if the predictions are right by 2015 there will be 20,000. . . . Is there enough green for that many boots, boots, and more boots hiking up and down again? Yes, there is. So far we have been able to accommodate every one, and Lena Lake and Snow Lake are in better shape than when I first saw them. Fortunately, those are not the only trails; even now there are many lonesome paths where there is just me and the chipmunks and sometimes a deer, a mountain goat, or a marmot.”<sup>5</sup>

Spring’s 1998 predictions remain valid today, but with the closure of so many wilderness roads throughout the Pacific Northwest, his “lonesome paths” are, and will remain less visited. And the more easily accessible trails he mentions will bear the brunt of more boots because of it.

While Manning and his *North Cascades Conservation Council* maintained a more dogmatic vision of “wilderness deeps,” Ira Spring’s *Washington Trails Association* (WTA) dedicated itself to preserving and maintaining hiking opportunities throughout Washington State. And where Manning’s NCCC relied on lobbyists and attorneys, Spring’s WTA utilized volunteer work parties and partnerships with public land managers to do trail maintenance in the Cascade and Olympic mountains. These work parties were (and remain) a key component of Green Bonding.

Spring noted in his 1998 autobiography that “[m]ountain trails are no longer just the realm of treehuggers, birdwatchers, or those wanting to enjoy peace and quiet.”<sup>6</sup> Rather than simply accepting Manning’s restrictive vision of wilderness—or regulatory solutions to the growing number of wilderness recreationalists—Spring took a more inclusive approach: “We

may be appalled at 3,000 or more people a day walking the Paradise trails at Mount Rainier or 30,000 a year hiking to Snow Lake in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, but if that is what it takes for the support of trails to the year 2015, so be it. It is up to us to figure out how to accommodate so many people without harming the temple.”<sup>7</sup>

Manning soon accused Spring of being “a trail promoter, not an environmentalist.”<sup>8</sup> And not too much later, he framed his disagreement with his long-time friend in philosophical terms: “It’s the difference between wilderness ‘deeps,’ which is what the Wilderness Act is all about, and . . . wilderness ‘shallows’ and wilderness ‘edge,’ and he [Ira] will sacrifice wilderness deeps for trails.”<sup>9</sup> Sadly, Manning refused to reconcile with, or even visit his long-time friend and preservation ally who lay dying of cancer in 2003. Instead he took one last opportunity to note what he perceived as his friend’s abandonment of the Edenic narrative and his fall from grace: “Ira is to wilderness environmentalism as Billy Graham is to religion.”<sup>10</sup>

Spring was deeply hurt, and from his deathbed he spoke of the legacy he and Manning had established together even as he lamented the loss of friendship. In his last interview, Spring effectively summarized the trouble with wilderness, roads, and access using the same value framework found in this thesis when he noted the personal and philosophical differences that destroyed his long friendship with Harvey Manning. Manning, he said, advocated for wilderness “by telling people about it and not wanting them in. I like to let people in to see it for themselves.”<sup>11</sup>

Ira Spring died two months later—and Manning followed him to the grave in 2006. Two friends and co-advocates for wilderness preservation could not overcome their divergent wilderness values and this, it seems fair to say, demonstrates that trouble with wilderness, roads, and access is much more than an academic abstraction.

## The Bureaucratic Solution versus Nature's Solution

In 1994, retired Washington State Governor Dixie Lee Ray wrote about the growing power of the environmental movement and its lack of adherence to principles of representative government:

Almost without our realizing it, a whole new level of government has emerged in America. It is composed of a combination of lawyers and bureaucrats who have come to dominate federal, state, and local government. It is government by regulation. It is now the fourth branch of government. The accumulation of legislative, executive, and judicial power in the same hands is the real definition of tyranny. And it has become the essence of environmental overkill.”<sup>12</sup>

Ray singled out two “tyrants”: the Environmental Protection Agency and The National Park Service, and she viewed the rule-making power held by these bureaucracies as arbitrary and undemocratic. While she didn't mention Mount Rainier specifically, her complaints about the implementation of the Wilderness Act were specific, and what she referred to as a “rules and more rules” mindset was directed at the power used by national parks to interpret Congressional legislation.<sup>13</sup>

Ray's concerns were nothing new. In fact, John Locke, in 1690, had warned about the danger of bureaucracy in his *Second Treatise*: “[T]he legislative cannot transfer the power of making laws to any other hands; for it being but a delegated power from the people, they who have it cannot pass it to others.”<sup>14</sup> And even Jean Jacque Rousseau, in his 1762 *Social Contract*, warned of the same: “The same situation occurs when the members of the government separately usurp the power which they ought only to exercise as a body; for this is no less an infraction of the law, and it produces an even greater disorder.”<sup>15</sup>

To be fair, national parks need rules. In fact, the wanton destruction of parklands around the base of Mount Rainier was a key reason local citizens demanded national park legislation in 1899. Nash informs the problem of the new wilderness bureaucracy one-hundred years later in a

manner that clarifies the present conundrum: “Because wilderness is a state of mind, the conditions under which one enters it are vital to the overall wilderness experience. Quotas, permits, lotteries, waiting lists, prescribed itineraries, and campfire assignments devastate the feeling of wilderness. . . . The price of the popularity that saved wilderness is intense management.”<sup>16</sup> While it may be asking too much of a legislative body to compose law addressing every nuance inherent in park operations, it seems fair to say that the meager six pages of the 1964 Wilderness Act are presently inadequate and yield far too much interpretive power to the whims of the bureaucracy—not to mention the litigiousness of special interests.

Of course, the trouble that centers around Rainier’s “roads less traveled”—including the intense management and bureaucracy that has arisen partly as a result of easy access to nature—*could* be significantly diminished if West Side and Mowich Lake roads are closed like the grade along the Carbon River. Ironically, it may be that the place where anti-bureaucratic, individualistic recreationalists and litigious biocentric greens finally stand together and shake hands is in front of a locked gate to a national park road.

### **Common Ground?**

While the Carbon River and Mowich Lake roads each provide a vision of opposite outcomes, no permanent solution to the trouble with wilderness and roads is yet on the horizon. Meanwhile, a smaller compromise has served to placate the outdoor recreation community along the West Side Road even as it waits for Rainier administrators to make a decision on repairs that may never come. Bicycles have been permitted along the section of road between the gate at Dry Creek and the 1970 road-end at Klapatche Point—about eleven miles—making former day hikes to Lake George and Indian Henry’s Hunting Ground still-viable outings. The grade to Round Pass, however, climbs steeply to 4000 feet before dropping down to St. Andrews Creek—and

then climbs yet again to the 4500 foot road terminus. The tremendous physical effort involved makes most hikers—not to mention the young and old—reluctant to get on their bikes, and thus the farthest reaches of the West Side Road see very little visitation.

The Carbon River Road, however, is relatively flat, gaining only 700 feet over its five-mile length. Additionally, the campground at Ipsut Creek remains open to hikers and cyclists alike—and it has become a moderately popular outing. (see fig. 5.3) Still, the combination ride and hike to the Carbon Glacier and back stretches the limits of a day-trip, but it too remains popular—at least among the physically fit.

Of course, bicycles are “mechanized” vehicles and are only tolerated on these two particular roads because their grades remain within the buffer zones that shield them from the surrounding designated wilderness. Were these roads to be enclosed by this legally-defined wilderness—as happened on the upper Stehekin in the North Cascades National Park—bicycles would be banned. An organization called Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER)—its membership made up largely of National Park Service employees—has expressed concerns about a 2010 Department of Interior decision giving individual national park managers more latitude to allow mountain biking in non-wilderness areas: “Millions of acres of parks that are proposed or recommended wilderness or otherwise wilderness eligible could be declared open to bike trails upon a waiver of a Management Policy by the NPS Director.”<sup>17</sup>

The idea that policy should be driven because an area *might* someday be designated as wilderness seems dubious. Even more questionable is PEER’s stated logic in opposing the mountain biking rule change: “Nobody is against mountain biking. The issue is whether one form of recreation can shut out all others in national parks that are meant for and paid for by everybody.”<sup>18</sup> Here, it seems quite possible that PEER and its members are oblivious to the irony

inherent in their statement which, if applied broadly, would open up the *taxpayers'* park to an inclusive, democratic, European-style experience.

The angst directed at mountain bikes certainly stems from the anti-mechanized provisions inserted into the Wilderness Act by Howard Zahniser—and the biocentric treatment of this document as scripture. Harvey Manning held a particularly dim view of mountain bikes as well, and explained his agitation: “It’s impossible to be nice when I’m driven off the trail by a pack of yipping, chattering youth dressed in their sisters’ underwear.”<sup>19</sup> Revealing a window into the dogmatic philosophy of Deep Ecology, Manning added, “I absolutely reject the idea you can have a wilderness experience on a bike.”<sup>20</sup>

Still, the late Edward Abbey—one of radical environmentalism’s greatest icons—*loved* the idea of bicycles in national parks. More specifically, Abbey liked the idea of replacing cars with bicycles in all national parks, and his amusing (albeit elitist) prose seems particularly well-suited to the problem with the three national park roads we have examined in this thesis:

No more cars in national parks. Let the people walk. Or ride horses, bicycles, mules, wild pigs—anything—but keep the automobiles and the motorcycles and all their motorized relatives out. . . . What about children? What about the aged or the infirm? Frankly, we need waste little sympathy on these two pressure groups. Children too small to ride bicycles and too heavy to be borne on their parents’ backs need only wait a few years—if they are not run over by automobiles they will grow into a lifetime of joyous adventure, *if we save the parks and leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations*. After banning private automobiles the second step would be easy. . . . Where dirt roads already exist they too will be reserved for nonmotorized traffic.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, the Sierra Club has taken a balanced approach to bicycles in heretofore non-wilderness areas: “Potential for losing opportunities for Wilderness designation should be taken into account when planning bicycle access. Conversely, the potential for losing bicycle opportunities should be taken into account when planning Wilderness designation. Sierra Club members are therefore encouraged to work with local off-road bicycle groups when preparing Wilderness proposals.”<sup>22</sup>

Of course, the bicycle compromise will find supporters and opponents on both sides of the



debate over wilderness and recreation at Mount Rainier—including partisans within the ranks of park service management.

Still, bicycles are not cars. A local newspaper reporter interviewed a National Park ranger at Ipsut Creek—near the end of the closed Carbon River Road—who agreed with the widely-held sentiment that the road ought to be reopened to cars, and, hence, a broader segment of the public. She said as much in her statement, albeit with a caveat that hints at intimidation: “They used to bus a lot of school children up here. Now, they can’t get in here. We need to open it back up. But don’t use my name.”<sup>23</sup>

The bicycle compromise notwithstanding, a philosophical debate over wilderness itself still rages on. A December 2012 article in *Slate* described “The Great Schism in the Environmental Movement,” and noted that a new group of “modernist greens” has injected itself forcefully into the wilderness debate. Emma Marris, a leader in this movement, proposes that “greens should recognize that the nature-knows-best, technology-averse philosophy has bred some unfortunate tendencies that make 20<sup>th</sup>-century environmentalism ill-suited to address 21<sup>st</sup>-century problems and needs.”<sup>24</sup> Peter Kareiva, another prominent voice in this new movement, explains the problem with outdated biocentric thinking, and proposes “a new vision of a planet in which nature—forests, wetlands, diverse species, and other ancient ecosystems—exists amid a wide variety of modern, human landscapes.”<sup>25</sup>

Still another member of this middle-ground movement, Benjamin Halpern, speaks of revising the Edenic narrative, and his words seem particularly relevant to three roads in Mount Rainier National Park: “For conservation and management to be successful, we need to change our relationship with nature, from trying to lock it away to using and enjoying it in a practical but

necessary way. We must reconcile purely conservation-focused goals with the many other values people have for nature.”<sup>26</sup>

Rebecca Conard sees education as both a problem and a solution to the trouble with wilderness, and she writes of a reconciliation of “Bios” and “Culturals” as a generational proposition: “our educational system has not only separated economics from ecology but also views conservation as the domain of a small subset of ‘applied’ biologists and systematically excludes the social scientists, even with compelling evidence that most conservation problems have their roots in human activities and needs.”<sup>27</sup> In fact, it’s easy to see the problem Conard describes reflected in National Park Service thinking in the days since the Wilderness Act’s passage, where park rangers have overwhelmingly hailed from the halls of the biosciences. Reconciliation, in Conard’s view, would necessarily come from within the National Park Service itself. She points out that its founding documents, in fact, demand such an approach:

The National Park Service represents perhaps the best institution to instill widespread collaboration among the ‘bios’ and ‘culturals.’ The 1916 Organic Act: “to conserve the scenery and natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. It also sets forth a clear directive for research-based resource management that has the potential to nurture greater interaction among cultural and natural resource managers.”<sup>28</sup>

She clarifies her premise using simpler language: “If one believes that, at heart, our environmental problems are really people problems, then it follows that one of the ways to nurture a greater sense of environmental stewardship in the general public is by integrating cultural and natural history.”<sup>29</sup> Conard, however, remains a realist: “There is no indication that rapprochement is imminent because the philosophical chasm now seems unbridgeable, and, from the positions staked out by the extremes, probably is.”<sup>30</sup>

On the biocentric side, Professor Michael Cohen takes exception to any suggestions ecology cede philosophical ground to its opponents—or the notion that a compromise solution exists at all. In fact, he suggests the Wilderness Act itself renders moot any attempts to negotiate with anthropocentrists: “Like the language of wilderness, the language of the middle ground slips, slides, or shifts from the name to the law.”<sup>31</sup>

Whatever form the future outcome of this debate takes, the history of Mount Rainier National Park must include both its natural and cultural elements. It is a history that is rich in roads, and is richer still because the vast majority of park recreationalists and visitors of all kinds accessed wilderness in their cars. David Louter sums up this utilitarian relationship best when he writes: “Wilderness, like parks, combined the human and the natural and was made real through use.”<sup>32</sup>

Finally, Theodore Catton reassures us that the path forward at Mount Rainier will remain a reflection of our changing values in the same way that today’s park reflects the changed values of the past—values we have just examined here. Catton writes: “It is likely that the demographic profile of Mount Rainier visitors will change, and as it does there will be a shift in park values. The Mount Rainier National Park experience today remains as contested as it is sublime.”<sup>33</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

I can still hear water cascading over the rocks and logjams in the nearby river, and I see the first rays of golden sunlight coming through the tall firs. The smell of smoke from last night’s campfires still hangs in the cold morning air as I walk along a faint path in the direction of the public toilet and I remember the way only after I hear the sound of a creaking spring and

slamming door up ahead—another camper up early for the big hike too. I’m shivering now and the vault-toilet smells foul. Someone pissed on the seat. I’m not worried about finding my way back to the trailer because I know my grandfather followed me to make sure I was safe; I can smell his cigarette somewhere outside—even in here.

Ipsut Creek Campground was never a fancy place like Ohanapecosh or White River. No showers, or pavement, or electricity—just a picnic table and a grated fire pit and a few community spigots. But it was from this place, back in the late 1960s, that my grandfather and I hiked along a mostly-flat, surprisingly wide trail along the river—remnants of the 1928 road—through beautiful rainforest trees and ferns to the terminus of the Carbon Glacier. A milky-white torrent gushed from a mysterious ice-cavern at the base of the glacier’s towering, rock-covered snout, and I was captivated by its power. A glacier-draped shoulder of Mount Rainier was visible high above, and the trail continued upward along the left edge of the glacier to grander vistas. Asahel Curtis’s 1909 trail, I would later learn. But grandpa said no farther, so back to the campground we went.

Although very young, I was so inspired by this adventure that I spent the next forty years exploring mountains and wilderness throughout the Cascade and Olympic ranges—and supporting those who fought for its preservation. But with the permanent closure of the Carbon River Road, what was once a six-mile round trip hike has become *sixteen*, and I wonder how many young children—future advocates for wilderness—will miss out on their first grand adventure. As a result, my support for *wilderness*—whatever that word means—has become more cautious, and it is now tempered by a sense of betrayal.

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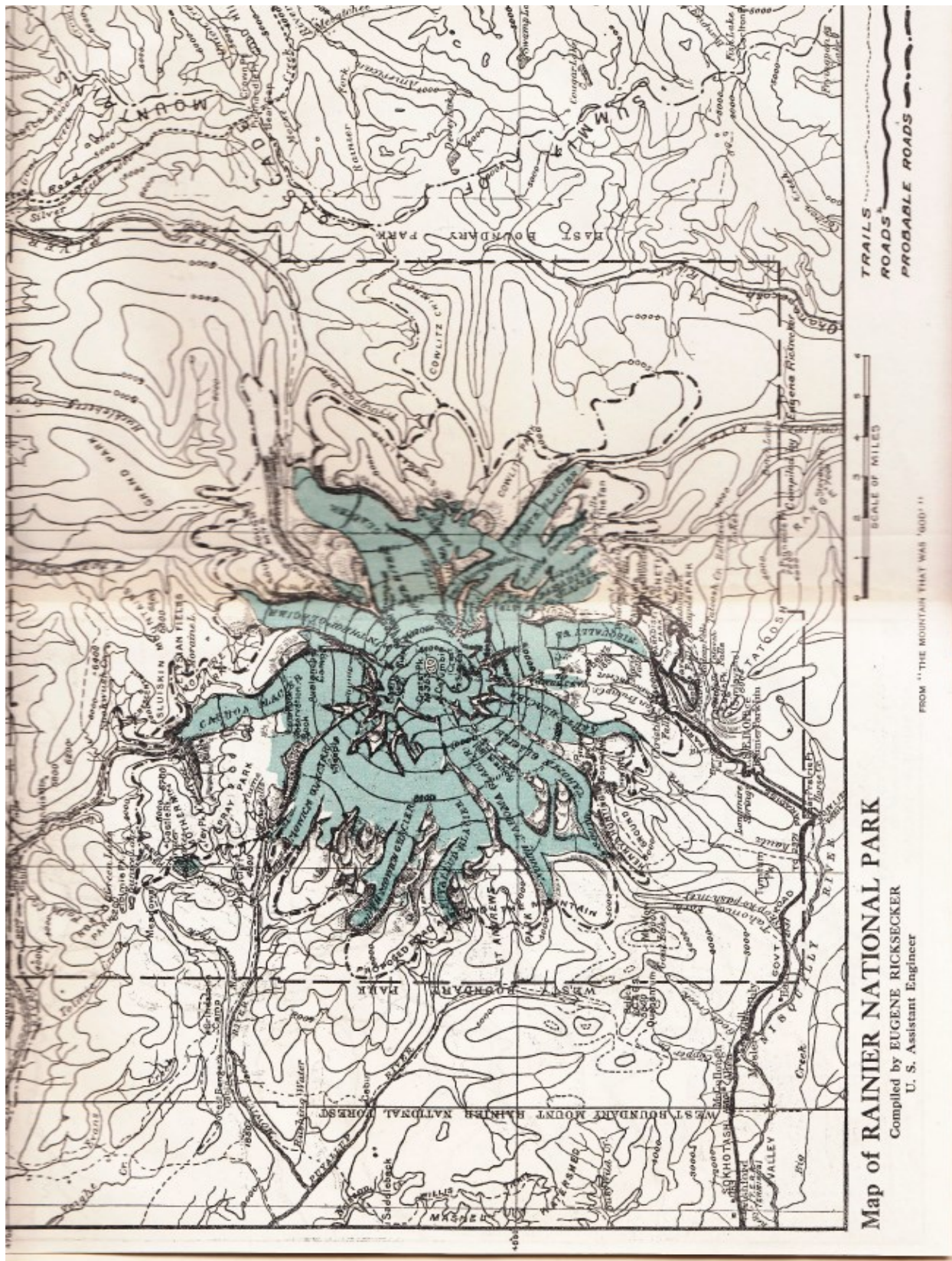


Figure 1.1. 1911 NPS map showing Major Hiram Chittenden's proposed "Round-the-Mountain" road. Reproduced from *The Mountain that was God* by John Williams. Personal collection.



Figure 1.2. 1926 NPS map showing proposed “development areas” on the park’s north side and the location of a proposed hotel in Spray Park. Courtesy Washington State Historical Society, Paul Seva Collection.



Figure 2.1. Members of the Mountaineers 1909 outing play tug-of-war on the fragile meadows of Moraine Park. Courtesy of Washington State Historical Society.

MT Rainier Road  
**ROADS TO CIRCLE MT. TACOMA**



Figure 2.2. The *Tacoma Daily Ledger* shows plans for West Side Road and the never-built Carbon-to-Mowich road over Ipsut Pass, August 1922. Courtesy Tacoma Public Library, Mount Rainier clippings file.



Figure 2.3. Crater (Mowich) Lake in 1908 along Bailey Willis's Grindstone Trail. Courtesy Washington State Historical Society, Album 116.

# Roads to Lure Tourists!

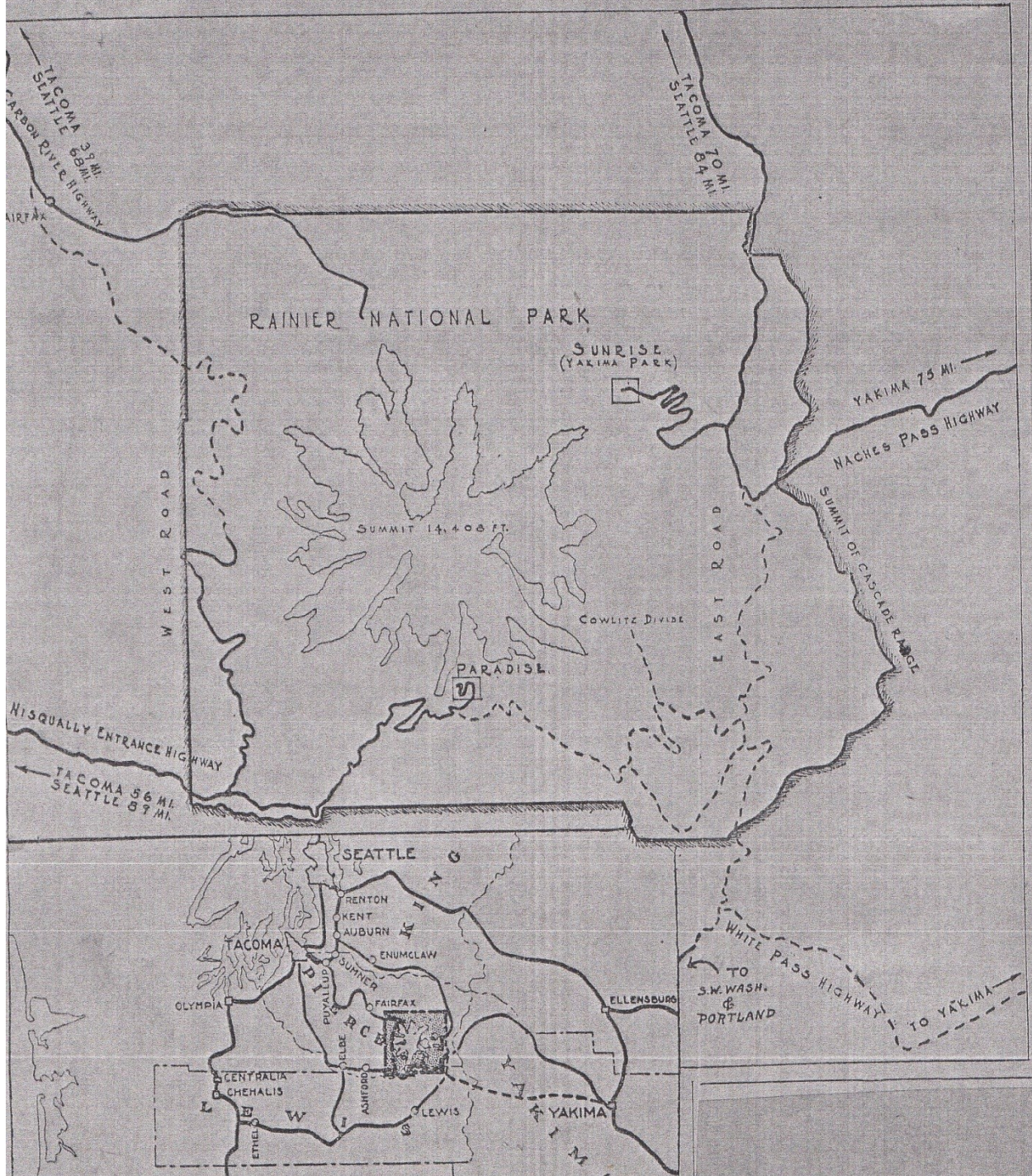


Figure 2.4. The *Tacoma News Tribune* announces plans for the Mowich Lake Road and its link to West Side Road, March 30, 1931. Courtesy Tacoma Public Library, Mount Rainier newspaper clippings file.



Figure 2.5. Dedication ceremony at Mowich Lake entrance on September 2nd, 1933. The road to the lake itself would not be opened to private cars for another 27 years. Courtesy National Archives and Records Administration--Pacific Alaska Region (Seattle).

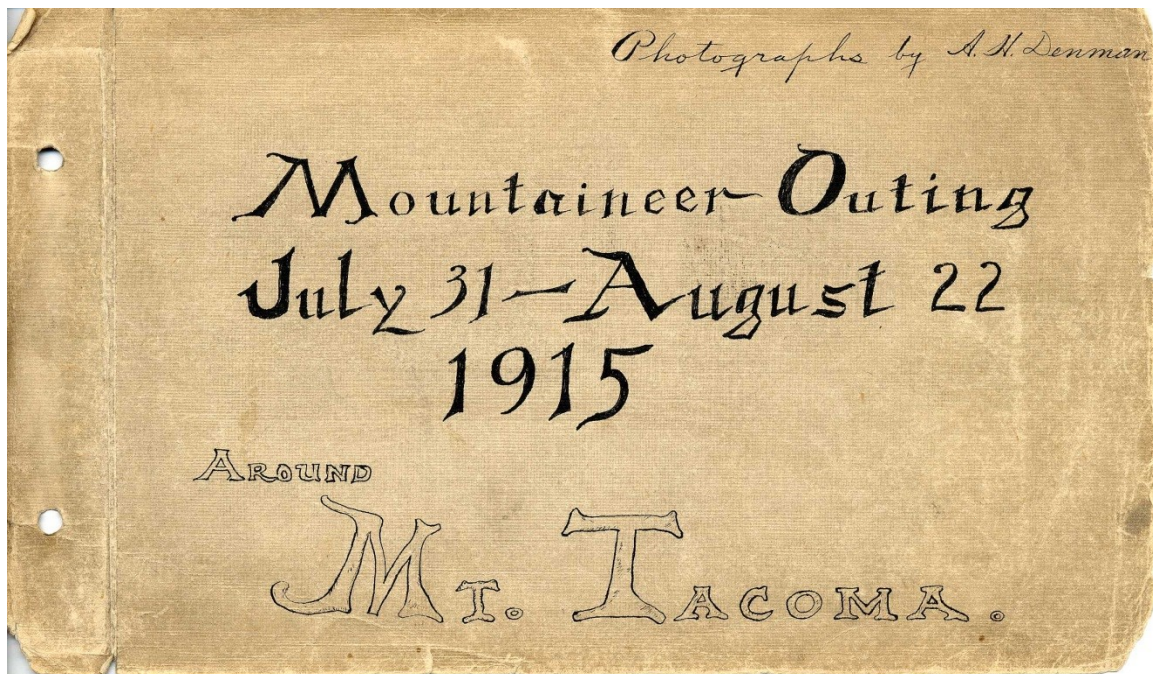


Figure 2.6. The Mountaineers photo album of their 1915 circumnavigation of Rainier. Five years later the route would be dubbed the “Wonderland Trail.” Courtesy Tacoma Public Library.



Figure 2.7. The *Tacoma Daily Ledger* announces the opening of the “Wonderland Trail” in 1920. Courtesy Tacoma Public Library, Mount Rainier newspaper clippings file.





Figure 2.8. Bridge over the North Puyallup River under construction in 1934; a representation of the time and place where local wilderness values abruptly changed. Source: National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/history>.



Figure 2.9. Parking in the gravel lot next to Mowich Lake, September 8, 2012. Photo by author.



Figure 2.10. NPS sign posted near the gated and closed Carbon River Road. Photo by author.

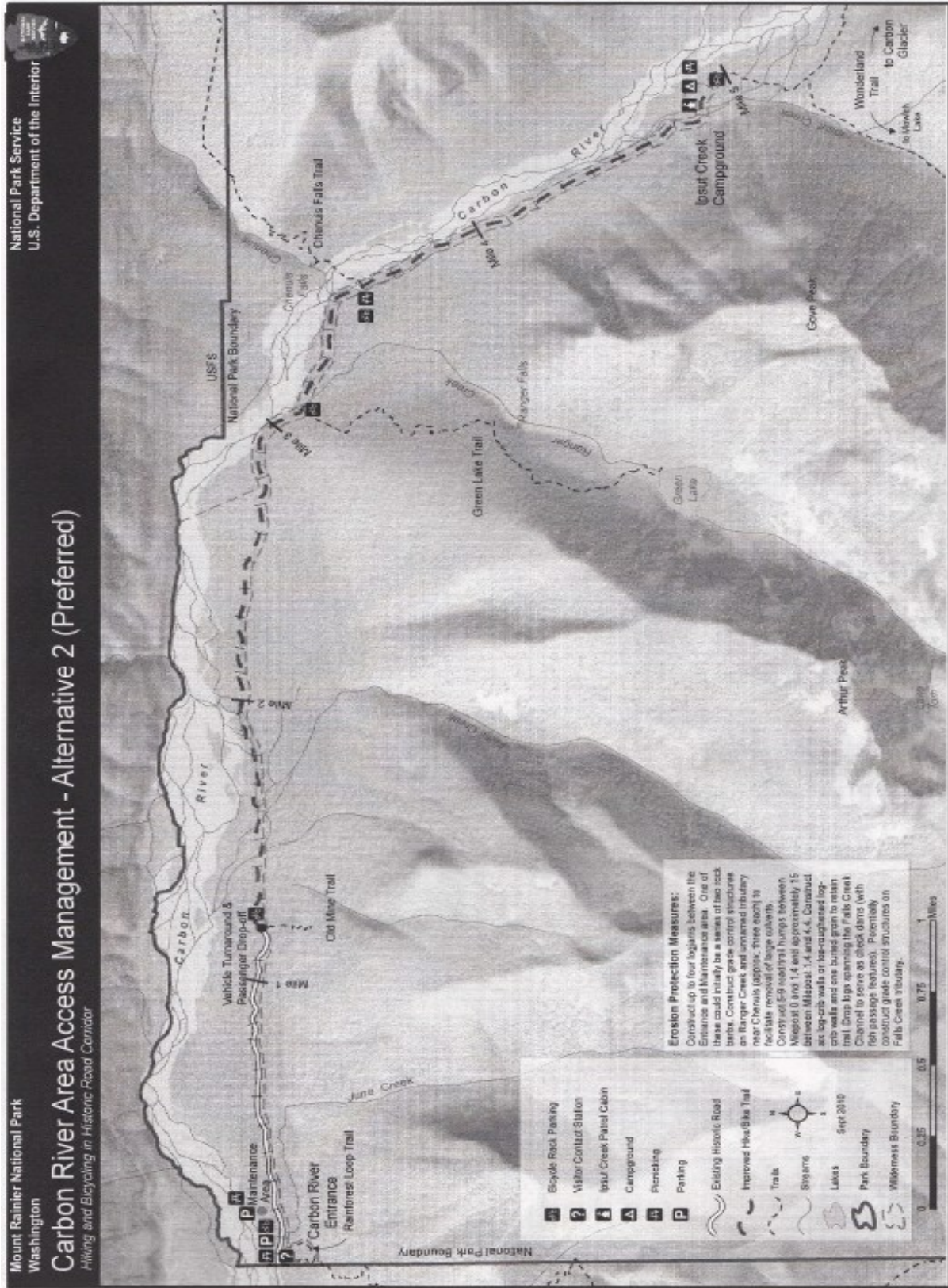


Figure 2.11. MORA Environmental Assessment preferred alternative, showing the first mile of road open to cars. The road remains open only to foot and bicycle traffic. Source: National Park Service 2010 EIS.



Figure 3.1. The washed out section of the Dosewallips River Road in 2010. Note the road-break on bottom right and its continuation far beyond. Source: Olympic National Forest Dosewallips EIS.

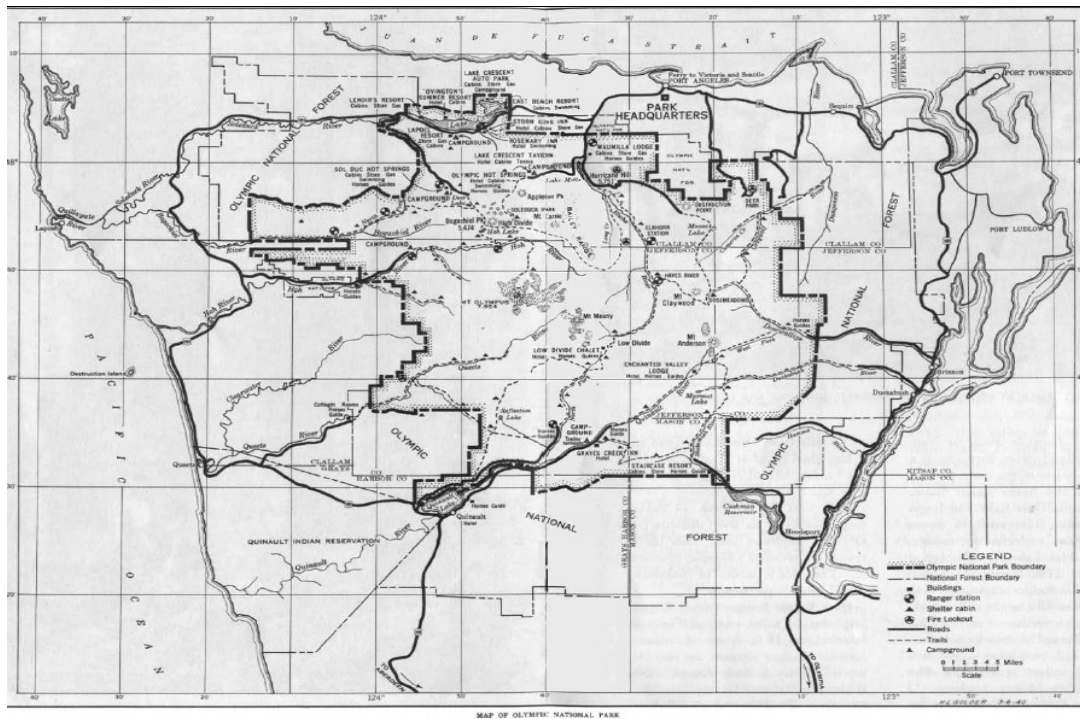


Figure 3.2. Olympic National Park surrounded by Forest Service lands. Source: National Park Service.



# Ira Spring

MR. IRA L. SPRING  
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June 29, 2002

Dear Mr. Craig:

I strongly support the preferred alternative D for the Dosewallips road repair.

While walking the extra five miles would not mean much to a week-long backpacker, it would impact weekend backpackers and make three day hikes impossible. (Lake Constance, West Fork Canyon Diamond Meadows, and the forest of the Dosewallips River trail.)

There is definitely a shortage of day hikes on state and federal land. According to the latest survey, there are 300,000 day hikers in this state and there are only 486 trails suitable for day hikes in our 100 Hikes book series, Best Hikes for Children, and the two volumes of short trails.

Every year some natural disaster such as the West Side Road at Mount Rainier and the Dosewallips in the Olympics temporarily, if not permanently, reduce the available trails, and there is no chance that new trails will be built in the foreseeable future.

Sincerely,

Figure 3.3. Ira Spring's letter to Olympic National Forest in support of Dosewallips Road repair. Courtesy Friends of Olympic National Park: <http://www.friendsonp.org>.

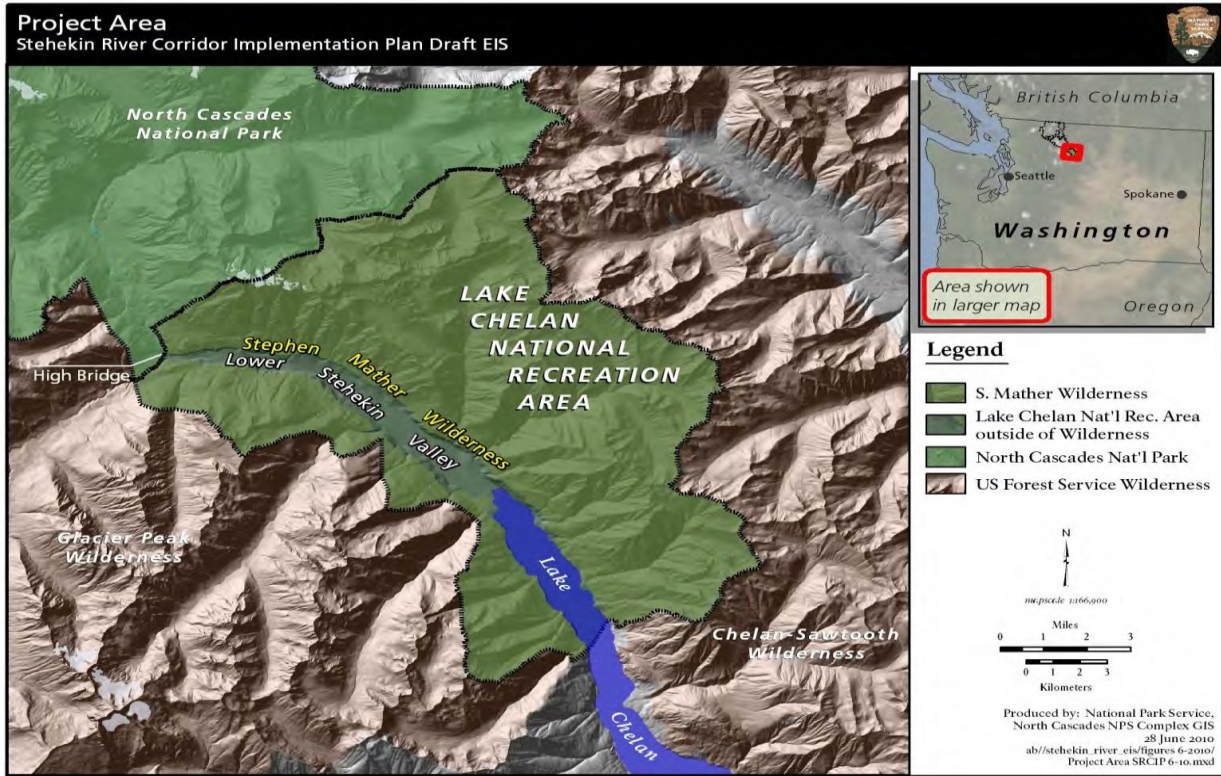


Figure 3.4. Complex land management in the Stehekin River valley. Source: National Park Service EIS 2010.



Figure 3.5. Washout at milepost 12.6, Suiattle River Road. Scheduled for repair beginning in 2013. Source: US Forest Service EIS.

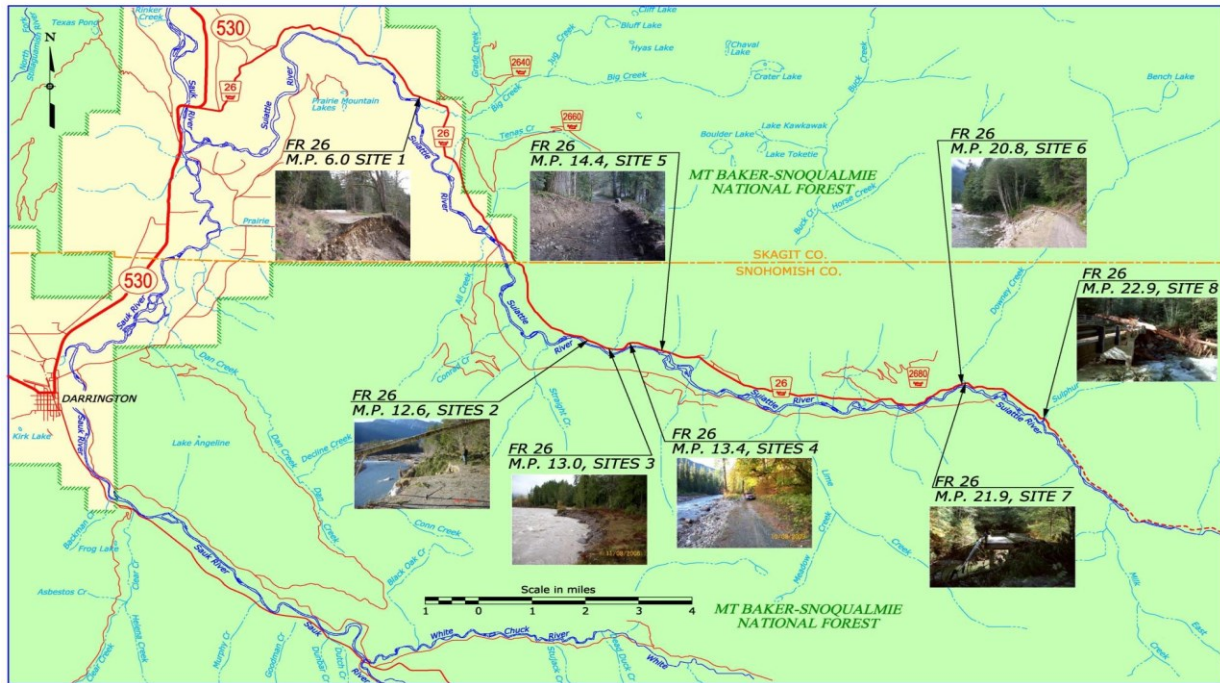


Figure 3.6. Numerous washouts along the Suiattle River Road. Maintenance and repair has not been a priority since timber revenue began decreasing in the 1990s. Source: US Forest Service EIS.

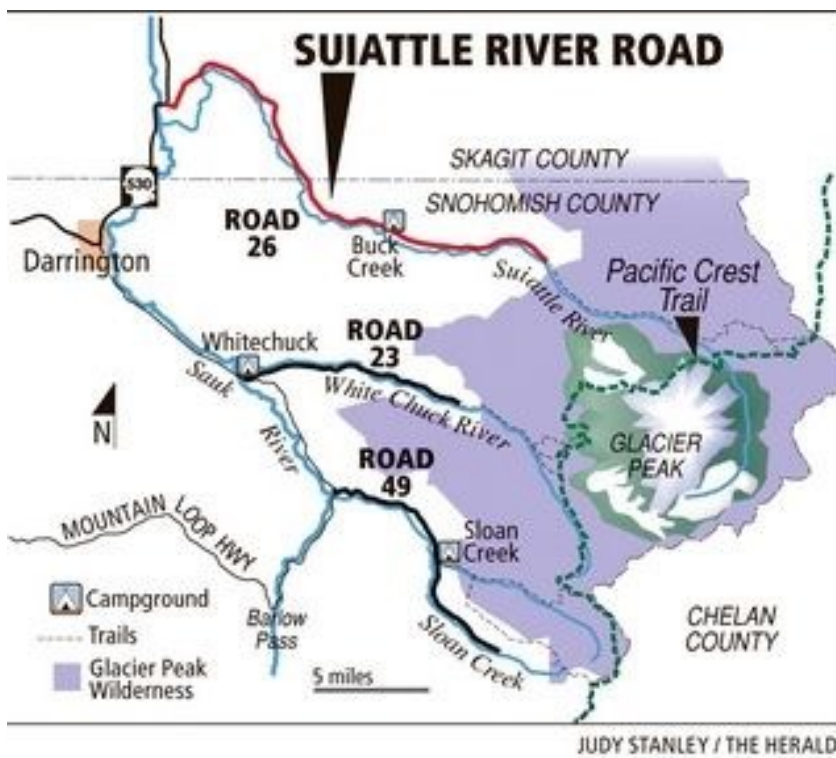


Figure 3.7. Glacier Peak regional overview showing Suiattle River Road. Courtesy Everett Herald.

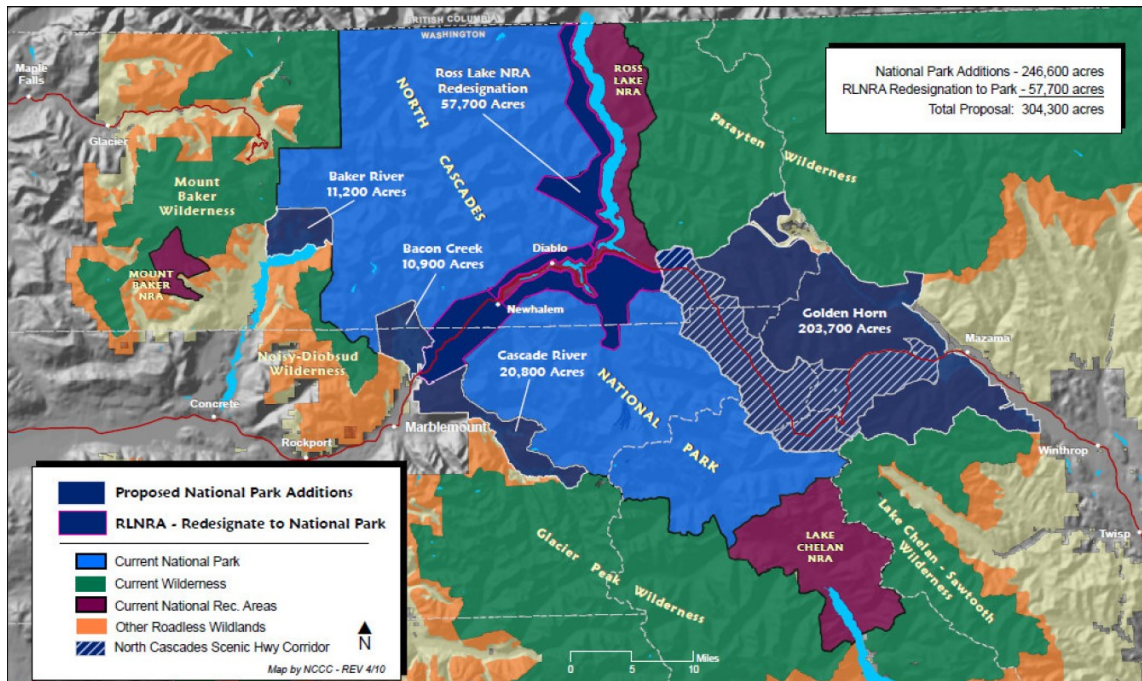


Figure 3.8. North Cascades Conservation Council’s American Alps Legacy Proposal showing proposed additions to the existing park boundaries in dark blue. Source: NCCC website, <http://www.northcascades.org>



Figure 3.9. Former automobile bridge on Suiattle River Road near Downey Creek, milepost 22.8—a ten mile walk from the car. Photo by author.





Figure 4.1. *American Progress* by John Gast, 1872. Only two decades later, the frontier would be declared “closed” by Frederick Jackson Turner.

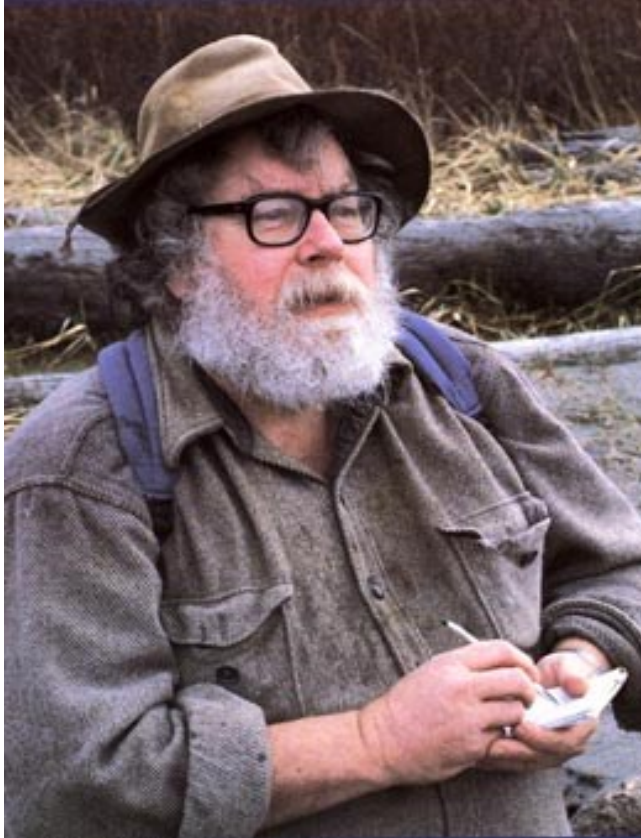


Figure 5.1. Harvey Manning. Source: Historylink.org.



Figure 5.2. Ira Spring. Source: <http://www.traditionalmountaineering.org>



Figure 5.3. Bicycling along the closed Carbon River Road near Ipsut Creek Campground. March 2012. Photo by author.

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