



FIELDREPORT

Northwest Region | Autumn 2014



The Elwha River – Dam Free at Last

On Tuesday, August 26th at 4:12 pm, crews pulverized the last 30 feet of the Glines Canyon Dam by a large explosion of dynamite, opening up the entire river for the first time in 100 years. The removal of the Elwha Dam was completed in March of 2012 and now with the removal of the Glines Canyon Dam complete the Elwha River is free!

However, restoration of the Elwha River goes far beyond dam removal. Monitoring and scientific research regarding the river's natural recovery must continue as well as the massive revegetation program occurring along the banks of the new river channel. With 400,000 native plants to be placed in these disturbed areas before they can be colonized by exotic

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Above: Elwha River raft trip. Photo courtesy of NPCA.

More Grizzly Bears in North Cascades National Park?

The U.S. Department of the Interior announced on August 21st a three-year process to assess impacts and produce a range of alternatives to determine whether grizzly bears should be restored to the North Cascades ecosystem in Washington State. This announcement kick-starts a public process that will explore the different options available to state and federal agencies regarding recovery of the threatened grizzly bear population in the North Cascades ecosystem. Grizzly bears and big, wild national parks go together—and North Cascades National Park is one of those rare places where it can still happen.

An integral part of unspoiled wilderness, grizzly bears are also important to the human ecosystem. Grizzlies need clear air, clean water, and wild country, things that are good for all of us. Recognized by the National Park Service as the wildest and most rugged mountain area in the Lower 48 states, North Cascades National Park and the surrounding national forest represent the last opportunity to recover this species in the Northwest.

Grizzly bears roamed most of western North America, including the North Cascades, for thousands of years. Today, about 1,500 grizzly bears remain in the lower 48 states—

a small fraction of their historic numbers and range. There may be fewer than 20 grizzly bears along the Washington/British Columbia border in the North Cascades, and just 80 in the Selkirk Mountains where Washington, Idaho, and British Columbia join.

NPCA has worked for years with the federally led Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee and our allies in support of a plan exploring the possibility of restoring this important species. The development of the plan that starts this fall will bring out the best science, offer alternatives for restoring this species, and provide opportunities for everyone to be heard.

While grizzly bears are expected to help maintain or improve the health of the North Cascades ecosystem, the impact to visitors will be minimal. Each year, millions of people visit parks with grizzly bears such as Glacier, Yellowstone, and Grand Teton National Parks to hike, fish, mountain climb, and camp. The presence of grizzly bears rarely limits their experience, except in terms of temporary closures of some areas when there is high bear activity.

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Above: Lyman Lakes, North Cascades ©Tim Nair | Shutterstock

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Northwest Regional Office

1200 5th Avenue
Suite 1925
Seattle, WA 98101
206.903.1444
206.903.1448 (fax)
www.npca.org/northwest

Rob Smith

REGIONAL DIRECTOR
rsmith@npca.org

David Graves

NW PROGRAM MANAGER
dgraves@npca.org

Kati Schmidt

SENIOR MEDIA
RELATIONS MANAGER
kschmidt@npca.org

Shannon Brundle

ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR
sbrundle@npca.org

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NORTHWEST CORNER BY REGIONAL DIRECTOR, ROB SMITH

As this is written it is difficult to forecast how this Congress will deal with many pending issues, such as expanding Oregon Caves National Monument and establishing a Manhattan Project National Historical Park, top priorities for NPCA in the Northwest.



and wildlife resource within easy range of millions of Northwesterners. If we can save this for the grizzly, we are saving it for everything and everyone else into the future.

Restoring one of the grand old lodges of the West—the

Chateau at Oregon Caves National Monument—is a priority for the National Park Service, but not until 2018 as it now stands. We are working to start that investment sooner for the benefit of monument visitors as well as the local community and its local non-profit which runs the facilities there.

However, we can see clearly that some emerging issues will be on the national park agenda due to recent developments. Your support and advocacy has helped ripen these opportunities.

The Elwha River just saw the last 30 feet of the Glines Canyon dam blasted away, freeing the largest watershed in Olympic National Park after being blocked to salmon for a century. While arranging to celebrate this largest river restoration project in North America, we also want to keep the support up for completing the job of recovery. NPCA will be organizing service projects to help revegetate the newly exposed river banks, media and VIP show-me trips down the river, and advocacy for continued stream and sediment science.

We're delighted to see that the Department of Interior is formally starting a study of grizzly bear recovery in the North Cascades, to be led by North Cascades National Park. The park anchors the wildest and most rugged mountain range ecosystem in the Lower 48 states, an extraordinary scenic, recreation

and wildlife resource within easy range of millions of Northwesterners. If we can save this for the grizzly, we are saving it for everything and everyone else into the future.

This past year has seen a lull in the struggle to maintain funding for the national parks, but every indication is that the debate has been postponed and not resolved. We'll be working hard to build back adequate funding for our national parks for roads, buildings and rangers lost in the budget battles of the last several years. The government shutdown of 2013 underscored the importance of our national parks to all Americans, and also woke up many decision makers to the economic engine that national parks are for state and local economies.

Thanks to our members, supporters and allies, NPCA is ready to take on these new opportunities to enhance and protect the national parks of the Northwest. And what a way to gear up for the 2016 Centennial of the National Park System!

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Above: Rob Smith ©NPCA. **Below:** North Cascades National Park ©Doug Walker



TAKE ACTION

Tell the North Cascades National Park Superintendent that you support efforts to recover grizzly bear populations—to keep the North Cascades wild with wildlife!

Superintendent

Karen Taylor-Goodrich
North Cascades National Park
810 State Route 20

Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284

www.nps.gov/noca/contacts.htm

The North Cascades Our "Wild Nearby"

So near, so wild. So accessible, so remote. Half a century after passage of the Wilderness Act, and forty-six years after creation of North Cascades National Park, the craggy range has become one of the most astonishing ecological preserves in the world.

The park, its neighboring Canadian provincial parks, and American wilderness areas provide protection of a contiguous 2.7 million acres between Interstate 90 and the Fraser River Valley, representing the largest preserve on the international border. Half a million acres are in the park proper.

Seven million people surround this island. Most are in the Puget Sound lowlands and greater Vancouver, but that total includes fast-growing communities on the drier eastern side, from Suncadia resort to Okanogan wine country.

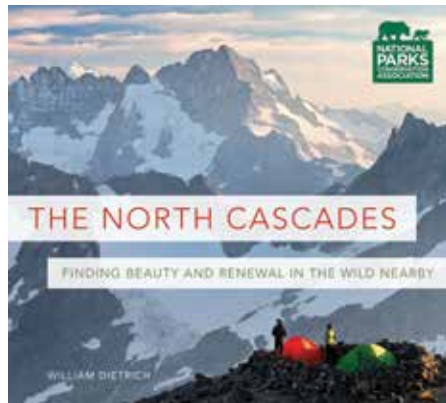
This press of people is expected to double sometime this century.

We are kept at bay by a deliberate limit to access roads. While Olympic National Park is visited by 3 million per year and Mount Rainier by 2 million, only twenty-six thousand walk far enough from their cars to step into North Cascades National Park proper. The Newhalem visitor center is in Ross Lake National Recreation Area, not the park.

"It is incredibly wild," said Chip Jenkins, a former park superintendent now serving as

deputy regional director. "It is raw. It is physically and psychologically demanding."

All this is by design. Rainier, Yosemite, and Yellowstone were designed for cars. While the North Cascades have several cross-mountain highways, none was punched into the park's wilderness core. It was a new experiment, offering a different kind of experience.



More glaciated than Glacier, offering a succession of ecosystems from wet to dry and low to high, and hosting 1,600 species of plants, the precious preserve depends on the stewardship of organizations such as the National Parks Conservation Association.

Now it needs a new generation of enthusiasts. To encourage thought and passion, the Braided River imprint of Mountaineers Books is publishing this October a photo-

and-word tribute called *The North Cascades: Finding Beauty and Renewal in the Wild Nearby*.

The coffee-table book is the work of several writers, photographers, and designers. It comes fifty years after *The North Cascades*, a Mountaineers Book by Harvey Manning and photographer Tom Miller that fueled the park campaign.

Much has changed in half a century. Population roughly doubled. The North Cascades Highway opened in 1972. Fire philosophy changed. Timber wars swung the Forest Service from liquidating old growth to growing it back. Glaciers have retreated. Snowline has risen. Recreationists are much more diverse.

And now comes climate change.

The book is a celebration of all that has been done, and a call for new leaders and visionaries. Why?

"Nowhere do the mountain masses and peaks present such strange, fantastic, dauntless, and startling outlines as here," wrote Henry Custer in 1859 when surveying the international boundary. "Whoever wishes to see nature in all its primitive glory and grandeur, in its almost ferocious wilderness, must go and visit these mountains."

Former Seattle Times journalist William Dietrich is the lead writer on the new book and author of eighteen other books.

More Grizzly Bears in North Cascades National Park?

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Traveling in bear country can be safe if some simple guidelines are followed:

- Always make your presence known. Avoid surprising a bear. Make plenty of noise near dense vegetation or areas of limited visibility.
- Remain aware of your surroundings and look for signs of recent bear activities, tracks, or scat.
- Avoid areas where bears might feed—berry patches, whitebark pine stands, recent wildlife kills, etc.
- Carry bear pepper spray and keep it within easy reach. Know how to use it.
- Be sure to store your food in plastic away

from your campsite. Hang the food from a tree at least 14 feet above ground and 4 feet away from the trunk.

- Avoid camping near streams, which bears frequent, or next to bushes, where visibility is limited.

Biologists have found that the North Cascades ecosystem is prime for grizzly recovery, although it could take decades. Recovery efforts are expected to be conducted deep in the area's backcountry, making regular human contact with the bears unlikely. The possibility of restoring this magnificent species to North Cascades National Park is an exciting and important undertaking that all supporters of national parks should get behind.

Right: Grizzly bear ©Photofellow | Dreamstime.com





Northwest Regional Office

1200 5th Avenue • Suite 1925
Seattle, WA 98101

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EVENT CALENDAR

Join us to learn about and enjoy
your Northwest national parks!

Book Launch Friday, October 10, 2014

Launch Party for *The North Cascades: Finding Beauty and Renewal in the Wild Nearby*. 6 to 9 pm at The Mountaineers Program Center, Seattle, Washington. Tickets available at: <https://wildnearby.eventbrite.com>

Revegetation for the Elwha River—Olympic Greenhouse November 21-22, 2014

NPCA will work with a small group of volunteers to hike in native plant seedlings and place them in the rocky, sandy land previously covered by the Lake Mills

reservoir behind the former Glines Canyon Dam. Volunteers should come prepared with sturdy hiking boots, water, lunch, warm layers and a readiness to get dirty! To sign up or for more information, contact David Graves at dgraves@npca.org or (206) 903-1645.

Volunteer Appreciation Day December 2014 (TBD)

Join the Northwest team of NPCA to celebrate our valued volunteers. We have had a full year of successful events thanks to you and we want to celebrate your contributions at an appreciation event in Seattle. More details will be available in November.

For details and more information on these events, visit www.npca.org/nwevents.



Above: National Trails Day at the North Cascades National Park. ©Shannon Brundle

The Elwha River – Dam Free at Last

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species, the park, the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, and their partners (including NPCA) have many more years of work to be done. Dam removal may be complete, but full river restoration is still at least 30 to 100 years away.

Just prior to the final stage of dam removal at Glines Canyon Dam, NPCA led three very successful river rafting trips down the Elwha River from just below the dam to the head of former Lake Aldwell, previously behind the Elwha Dam.

These trips allowed NPCA Regional Council Members, the media, and congressional staff members to observe the incredible ongoing changes the river is experiencing in the wake of dam removal. On this trip, we saw the effects of the massive release of sediment from behind Glines Canyon Dam as well as salmon venturing up river through the former dam site of the Elwha Dam.

The Park Service has allowed visitors to view the former site of the Elwha Dam for over year. However, by the end of 2014, both sides of the former Glines Canyon Dam that were left for historical interpretation and viewpoints will be accessible by the public as well. The Olympic Hot Springs Road will be reopened to visitors allowing them the opportunity to experience the incredible canyon that has been uncovered as well as the river that is reclaiming its rightful place in Olympic National Park.

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