

## Icicle Work Group muddles on

*By Karl Forsgaard*

Alpine Lakes Wilderness remains at risk of future water development. As of June 2017, the Icicle Work Group (IWG) was preparing to release its Draft Programmatic EIS, with no indication of any “course corrections,” despite new information on impacts of climate change.

As previously reported (*Alpine*, 2016 issue No. 1), the two government agencies that co-convene IWG (State Department of Ecology and Chelan County) are evaluating whether to build dams, manipulate water levels, and issue water rights from seven lakes in the Wilderness: Colchuck, Eightmile, Upper and Lower Snow, Nada, Lower Klonaquia and Square Lakes. Creeks impacted by the manipulation include Eightmile, French, Icicle, Klonaquia, Leland, Mountaineer, Prospect and Snow Creeks.

IWG also revived its proposal to drain an eighth lake, Upper Klonaquia, by installing a siphon or pump or blasting a tunnel between Upper and Lower Klonaquia Lake. Their claimed goals include extracting more water for “new home construction,” to solve instream flow problems in Icicle Creek near the Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery, to protect tribal fishing rights and improve irrigation reliability.

In May 2016, the agencies concluded a public comment period for scoping under the



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State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). ALPS submitted a joint comment letter that was co-signed by 40 parties. We appreciate the irrigators’ need for water to irrigate their orchards and keep them productive. We do not object to the exercise of valid, existing water rights, but we question an assertion of water rights that have been relinquished or are otherwise invalid. While we appreciate the goal to improve instream flows in Icicle Creek, it is contradictory to exploit one natural area under the guise of enhancing another, particularly when other options are available.

Our SEPA comments urged that the EIS include a full range of alternatives, including a Wilderness Protection alternative (not seeking any increase in the amount of water removed from the Wilderness); a Water Right Relinquishment alternative; a Water Conservation alternative;

*Helicopter landing pad on dam at Lower Klonaquia Lake with Granite Mountain in distance.*

and a Water Right Change alternative (moving irrigators’ point of diversion downstream to the Wenatchee River).

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Unfortunately, IWG has failed to take the conservative step of exploring such a range of alternatives.

### **IWG Direction After SEPA Scoping**

In July 2016, two months after the close of the SEPA scoping comment period, IWG presented new information at a public meeting in Seattle, including four proposed DPEIS alternatives, which apparently have not been modified in the eleven months since. The publicly scoped “Base Package” is one alternative; another alternative adds projects that were omitted from scoping, including the Klonauqua tunnel, expansion of Snow Lakes (i.e. new dam), and greater expansion of Eightmile Lake. IWG admitted the Icicle Peshastin Irrigation District “doesn’t need any more water.” IWG conducted a summer “pilot” study of release impacts on stream flows, but failed to measure temperatures. In October, ALPS wrote to IWG requesting discussion of actions taken by IWG after the close of SEPA scoping (including the DPEIS alternatives), and IWG’s gag rule.

In December 2016, the Power Consulting report found that Ecology’s Office of Columbia River is overstating its accomplishments and has wasted money investigating proposed dams that could never be built (see p. 3 of *Alpine*).

Also in December, Icicle Creek Watershed Council withdrew from IWG, but later rejoined, albeit on a provisional basis due to concerns of inadequate emphasis on water conservation, and degradation of the beauty and ecology of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. In January 2017, IWG member Trout Unlimited wrote that it concurs in the ICWC concerns, and concluded:

“Given the current project sponsor process, TU has decided we will not act as a project sponsor of any current IWG projects. Until there is a process that allows for transparency and inclusion our preference is to remain focused on our other project work ....”

IWG lacks broad-based support, and falls short in representation from the conservation and recreation community.

In March 2017, IWG circulated an abstract for its upcoming June 2017 presentation at the American Water Resources Association conference on climate change solutions. IWG’s 458-word abstract failed to mention Alpine Lakes Wilderness as the location of the water storage projects in question, yet more evidence of IWG obfuscating the fact that its projects are inside that Wilderness.

### **Climate Change Analysis**

IWG’s April 2017 meeting included presentations from UW’s Climate Impacts Group, which can be read online at the County website link below. Using models to predict stream flows over the next 50 years, the Icicle basin is projected to see dramatic decrease in flows during the peak season, with average decreases of 33 percent in June, 59 percent in July, 60 percent in August and 31 percent in September. This projected decrease is drastic, and is information IWG should have started with to ensure projects proposed in the Icicle Strategy make the most sense based on climate trends. Given the new information, it is essential for IWG to take a fresh look at its project list.

### **Eightmile Lake Dam Construction Study**

IWG’s April 2017 meeting also included IWG consultant Anchor QEA, LLC presentation on the proposed Eightmile Lake dam construction, which can be read

online at the website link below. Its discussion of “Existing Challenges, Deficiencies, Constraints” references the dam’s embankment erosion and reduced water storage, and that construction of a new dam faces “Construction Challenges” including access and mobilization of equipment, deep excavation and earth moving, but does not identify as a constraint the fact that the site is inside Wilderness.

### **What You Can Do**

The Draft Programmatic EIS under SEPA is slated for release in July 2017. SEPA documents, meeting records (including the Climate Impacts and Eightmile Dam presentations of April 2017), and other information can be found on the agency website: [www.co.chelan.wa.us/natural-resources/pages/icicle-work-group](http://www.co.chelan.wa.us/natural-resources/pages/icicle-work-group)

As we went to press in mid-June, IWG had not yet decided the DPEIS release date, or the length of the period it would allow for public comments. IWG said there would probably be only one public meeting, in Leavenworth. Please ask IWG to also conduct a public meeting on the west side of Alpine Lakes Wilderness, i.e. the Puget Sound metropolitan area. Please also review the DPEIS when it is released, submit comments to IWG, and let your elected officials know how important this issue is to you. Find more information on the ALPS website: <http://www.alpinelakes.org/>

You can contact ALPS at [alpinelakes.info@gmail.com](mailto:alpinelakes.info@gmail.com)

The Wilderness is managed by the U.S. Forest Service, which must also prepare an environmental analysis under NEPA to ensure protection of wilderness values, although this federal process has not yet started.

# Yakima Plan update

ALPS and other conservation groups are continuing their active opposition to the most destructive parts of the 2012 Yakima Plan.

In October 2016, CWU Professor Emeritus and Yakima irrigator Ken Hammond spoke at the annual Bumping Lake campout. His paper, *Water conflicts – Seeking solutions in the Yakima Basin*, can be read online at: <http://www.celp.org/programs/voices-for-water/ken-hammond/>.

Over the past decade the Washington State Department of Ecology's Office of the Columbia River (OCR) spent \$200 million financed by taxpayer-backed bonds in an attempt to build more dams and increase water supplies in eastern Washington. In December 2016, a new, independent report by Power Consulting of Missoula found that OCR is overstating its accomplishments. The Power report suggests that the Washington Legislature should seek a performance audit of

the program before it considers shelling out any more of the public's cash, and concludes:

- OCR has misrepresented the amount of water that it has actually put to use in eastern Washington;
- OCR has failed to acknowledge the need for hundreds of millions more dollars to bring current projects to fruition; and
- OCR has wasted a lot of money investigating proposed new dams that it should have known could never be built.

The Power report, *Department of Ecology Office of Columbia River: The Last Ten Years*, can be read online at: [http://ucrsierraclub.org/pdf/OCR-Power-Report\\_12-3-2016%20.pdf](http://ucrsierraclub.org/pdf/OCR-Power-Report_12-3-2016%20.pdf)

In January 2017, based on the Power report as well as OCR's dubious role in the Icicle Work Group, ALPS submitted testimony to the State House Capital Budget

Committee, asking that the Legislature obtain a performance audit of OCR's last ten years, before any further funds are provided to OCR.

In March 2017, Senator Maria Cantwell's bill to authorize the 2012 Yakima Plan (which failed to pass in the last Congress) was reintroduced as S.714 in the new Congress, and it was reported out of the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee without any public hearings.

The Yakima Workgroup (co-chaired by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the State Department of Ecology) has prepared a new economic report that attempts to demonstrate economic losses to the Yakima Basin if additional so-called "drought insurance" water projects are not built by taxpayers.

A revised EIS on the Lake Kachess pumping project and Keechelus-to-Kachess pipeline is expected to be released later this year.

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## Wallace Falls timber sale battle continues

The battle to stop or at least scale down the Singletary timber sale on the eastern boundary of Wallace Falls State Park is continuing. It would take pages to describe all the twists and turns over the past months. Snohomish County has applied to reconvey part of the sale area back from DNR (it is actually county owned land administered by DNR). The sale was initially approved for

auction in January but pulled back. In May, ALPS submitted a letter requesting further postponement of the sale. However, the sale then went to the auction block. As we went to press in late May, a lawsuit had been filed by several allies (Pilchuck Audubon Society, Friends of Wild Sky and SVENA) to try to keep the chainsaws at bay.

The Singletary sale was designed in the most damaging

way possible, bypassing millions of board feet of timber in order to put a road and a clearcut right up at the border of Wallace Falls State Park. The rest of the Skykomish valley near Sultan and Gold Bar is being clearcut into a moonscape. Wallace Falls, the scenic highlight of that valley, deserves better treatment than it has gotten so far from DNR.

# West Fork Miller update

By Don Parks



*Alex Craven and Harry Romberg along the West Fork Miller.*

On an early season scouting trip up the Miller River Road System (R6410) on 16 May, we stopped at the 'trailhead' for West Fork Miller to have a look at the river and forest. To our amazement, and pleasure, we noted that the Forest Service has decommissioned the lower part of the road, where it has jurisdiction, on this old "mine to market" road that goes up the river and accesses an old mine site.

This road has generally not been drivable for nearly all of the public for 30-40 years and has been otherwise used as a trail. It is a nice low elevation, early season walk alongside a rushing river and deep forests. See WTA Hiking Guide, [www.wta.org/go-outside/hikes](http://www.wta.org/go-outside/hikes), for "West Fork Miller River" online.

The responsibility for this "mine to market" road belongs to King County that gated the road nearly 15 years ago when

a few vehicles were somehow negotiating it, with much of the road surface in a highly degraded condition, and violating the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. In 1981 the Alpine Lakes Area Management Plan called for closing and obliterating road and converting it into a trail. The Forest Service did not implement this part of their plan 30+ years ago because King County was not prepared to close off the road. That situation appears to have changed and the surveyors will keep you informed.

# Okanogan-Wenatchee Travel Management update

Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest (OWNF) has again postponed its release of a final NEPA decision and Motor Vehicle Use Map under the 2005 Travel Management Rule. This decision and map will govern all motorized travel in summer, i.e. the road system, plus off-road vehicle (ORV) use of trails. Winter off-road motorized use (i.e. snowmobiles) will be addressed separately.

In April 2017, OWNF revised its schedule as follows:

- Update to Public and Stakeholders\_\_\_\_\_Spring 2017
- Publish Final EA and Draft Decision Notice\_\_\_Summer 2017
- Objection Period Closes\_\_\_45 days from legal notice
- Objection Resolution Period Closes\_\_\_\_\_Fall 2017
- Sign Decision\_\_\_\_Fall/Winter 2017
- Motor vehicle Use Map Published\_\_\_\_\_Spring 2018

In the future, each district will have the opportunity to make changes to the maps, allowing for public involvement.

OWNF has put 1400 comment letters (including ours) into an online "Reading Room" at this link: <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/ReadingRoom?Project=46467>

OWNF is a national outlier on Travel Management, and will be one of the last of the 150 National Forests to designate ORV routes under the 2005 Travel Management Rule.



# Middle Fork Snoqualmie paving nearing completion

By Rick McGuire



The long effort to pave the Middle Fork Snoqualmie road from Valley Camp to Taylor River is nearing an end. This year's work will consist mostly of finishing touches, such as berming and blocking unauthorized vehicular paths leading off it, along with signing, striping and guard rails in some places.

Conservationists, ALPS included, did not want a wide "highway" cutting a big swath up the valley, and worked hard to get the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) to build a road that fits the valley, rather than making the valley fit the road.

That part has been largely successful. The road winds its way through the Middle Fork forests, rather than having simply bulldozed them out of the way. Trees still arch together overhead in many places. It does not destroy the beauty of the valley. As roads go, this one is on the low impact side.

When the road was initially proposed, designed and approved back during the 1990's, no one foresaw the skyrocketing levels of use now happening in the Middle Fork. Ever increasing levels of traffic throughout the Puget Sound region make many mountain destinations seem much farther away than they once were. And many old logging roads are slowing away and becoming undriveable. The Middle Fork, once bypassed by most outdoor enthusiasts, is now seeing an explosion in use that was once unimaginable.

Dealing with ever increasing visitation will be a huge challenge. No one really knows what will happen, and to what extent the narrow road will be blocked by vehicles illegally parked on the travelway. There could be major lockup if cars from different directions meet on what could be a one lane road, with other cars coming up behind them. It's too

## *Middle Fork road newly paved downstream from Mine Creek.*

early to tell what will happen, but the road near the Mailbox Peak trailhead has already been reduced to one lane for almost 2000 feet on more than one occasion this year. Fortunately no blockages occurred on the one open lane.

ALPS, along with many other organizations, is working with the Mountains to Sound Greenway to find solutions to this and other problems. The Middle Fork was once famous as a trash dumping and shooting zone. Those problems are also starting to re-emerge, but the real challenge will be getting people in and out of the valley without the place choking on too many vehicles. Use levels can only be expected to keep climbing from here. Creative, thoughtful solutions will be needed to keep the Middle Fork valley from being loved to death.

# Jeeps and snowmobiles invade Mission Ridge ski area

By Gus Bekker



GUS BEKKER

*Jeep assault on Mission Ridge.*

On a sunny weekend in May this year seven 4x4 Jeeps using the backroads originating in Ellensburg drove to the summit of Mission Ridge ski area and then illegally drove off road inside the ski area.

The group entered the special use permit area from the top of what is known as the downhill start of the Skookum ski run and then they proceeded to ride inside the ski area in the area known as "The Bathtub". In addition, snowmobilers have been parking at the entrance to the ski area parking lot which is closed and blocked by concrete barriers and riding around the barriers to ride their machines inside and around the ski area.

We can only imagine the damage that the jeeps have done accessing the top of the ski area from either the Stemilt Basin road

or via Ellensburg. In one photo you can see where the jeep tracks leave the snow and go onto bare ground. These jeeps had to cross many sections of snowless road where the damage to a wet, moist road is known to all of us who recreate in the forest. Hopefully they did not decide to go "mudding" on their way up to the top of the Mission Ridge ski area.

To backcountry skiers and snowshoers who have very few places they can recreate in peace and quiet, this abuse by the motorized users has essentially ruined their recreation experience and also poses a safety hazard. What will happen when an unsuspecting skier comes across the 1-2 foot deep ruts left

by the jeeps inside the ski area? In addition, given that snowmobilers have four sno-parks, 270 available parking spaces, and over 200 miles of groomed snowmobile routes surrounding Mission Ridge, why do they insist on riding illegally inside the non-motorized special use permit area? The area around Mission Ridge, especially the Clara Lake basin, has become an unmanaged free-for-all for the motorized users and is conflicting with those who have very few places to go to enjoy a quiet, winter backcountry experience.

The Okanogan-Wenatchee Forest will be releasing their summer Travel Plan soon, hopefully this coming fall, and ALPS will be asking our members to comment on the plan. The travel plan will be the guiding document designating where motorized use is allowed on the forest. Following in the steps of the summer Travel Plan will be a separate winter Travel Plan which will designate specific areas where winter motorized use is allowed. We will keep you up to date on the status of both of these important Travel Plans for our local forests.



# In Remembrance

## Karyl Winn passes away



Karyl Winn passed away on May 28, 2017. She was one of the original trustees of ALPS, and she brought a sense of professionalism to our board—a trait sought for ALPS by its founding president Ben Hayes. In ALPS early days she chaired the Resource and Research Committee, a fitting role for a research librarian and archivist. Karyl worked with her husband Norm on the Alpine Lakes legislation in 1975 and 1976. In addition to serving for decades on the ALPS board, she was also a director of the Alpine Lakes Foundation, and served as its treasurer. Karyl was also instrumental in establishing the Alpine Lakes Protection Society archives at the University of Washington, in the Special Collections division. She will be dearly missed.

## Mike Lowry, Defender Of Nature

Washington state has lost one of its premier defenders of wild places with the recent death of Congressman and Governor Mike Lowry. One of Mike's many accomplishments was to break the stranglehold veto that rural Congressmen once had over establishing any Wilderness on lands falling within their districts. Along with then-Congressman Joel Pritchard, Mike argued that National Forests belong to all Americans and that people from urban districts, such as his, should have just as much a say as locals in how they are managed.



He won. The signature accomplishment of his time in Congress was the 1984 Washington Wilderness bill, which protected over a million acres, much of it in places which would never have been protected had local Congress members kept the kind of veto power they had once wielded.

The 1984 act came only eight years after enactment of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness in 1976, so it focused on areas north and south of the Alpine Lakes. But Mike did plenty to help the central Cascades as well. As a King County Councilman before he went to Congress, and as Governor afterwards, he helped establish growth management rules, and helped preserve farmlands. He stood firm against efforts to build

an outer ring freeway, "Interstate 605," which would have followed the route of Highway 18 from Auburn to Snoqualmie, then crossed the Snoqualmie river to run right along the western foot of the Cascades all the way to the Skykomish valley, then northwest to Arlington. Had I-605 been built, the entirety of King County from Seattle right to the Cascades would have been solid sprawl.

Keeping King County from being entirely paved over was just one of Mike's many accomplishments. Although he personally preferred a cold beer in a cool shady spot to a hot hike up a mountainside, he did more to preserve forests and wild places than almost any other politician in the history of Washington state. He will also be remembered for his warm, friendly personality. Although he became a powerful politician, he never put on airs of any kind. He was just as welcoming to the lowest of the low as he was to the high and mighty. He was always a friend to people, animals, and green, open spaces. He will be missed.





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KARL FORSGAARD

*Middle Fork road paved upstream from concrete bridge.*



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