

# ENDANGERED TRAILS 2004



A REPORT OF THE WASHINGTON TRAILS ASSOCIATION

## Acknowledgements

This Guide would not have been possible without the generous support of our members, sponsors, and partners. Special thanks go to Dave Morgan, whose graphic design work has been a great addition to WTA's publications

Washington Trails Association extends its sincere gratitude to the volunteers and WTA staff members who gave invaluable contributions. Jonathan Guzzo coordinated production of the Guide. Dave Shiefelbein contributed the beautiful North Cascades Sunset cover photograph, and the photographs for the South Fork Skokomish and West Fork Methow. Dave Morgan contributed the White Chuck Bench photo, and brother Colin Morgan took the shot of the PCT/Suiattle Creek/Milk Creek loop. Alan Bauer is responsible for photographs of Lake Creek, Middle Cascade River, and Thunder Creek. Douglas Diekema photographed Little Beaver Creek. Finally, *Washington Trails* Managing Editor Andrew Engleson took the photo of Peek-A-Boo Lake.

Washington Trails Association Executive Director Elizabeth Lunney and Director of Outreach and Communications Lauren Braden gave invaluable advice in the course of this Guide's production, and have done yeoman's work to publicize the damage wreaked by storms in the Cascades this year.

TOPO! map were created using National Geographic TOPO! Washington State Series with 3D Shaded Relief. Support WTA by purchasing TOPO! on our website.

Additional copies of this guide are available online at [www.wta.org](http://www.wta.org). Thanks to Adobe for donating Adobe Illustrator and Acrobat Distiller to make that possible.

## **About Washington Trails Association**

Washington Trails Association (WTA) is the voice for hikers in Washington state. We advocate protection of hiking trails, take volunteers out to maintain them, and promote hiking as a healthy, fun way to explore Washington.

Ira Spring and Louise Marshall co-founded WTA in 1966 in response to the lack of a political voice for Washington's hiking community. WTA is now the largest state-based hiker advocacy organization in the country, with over 5,500 members and more than 2000 volunteers.

### **Maintaining Washington's Trails**

In the past decade, WTA conducted more than 350,000 hours of volunteer maintenance on public lands in Washington. That's an in-kind donation of more than \$3.5 million to parks and forests statewide. Fun trail work parties let volunteers (1,800 of them each year) give back to the trails they love.

### **Advocating for Hiking Trails**

WTA collaborates with federal and state land managers and elected officials to advance the interests of hikers. We combine our advocacy with education and information. Our Endangered Trails Guide, published every spring, highlights many of the challenges facing trails today, including a lack of maintenance, resource extraction and overuse.

### **Getting People Outdoors More**

WTA promotes hiking as a fun, healthy way to explore Washington. Events like TrailsFest ([www.trailsfest.org](http://www.trailsfest.org)) and our Wildland Discovery Hike series offer an enjoyable and safe environment for families and urban dwellers to explore the outdoors. Washington Trails magazine is packed with backcountry advocacy opportunities, gear reviews, hiking tips, and feature stories. Our website, [www.wta.org](http://www.wta.org), is a superb, interactive resource for hikers to stay informed on the latest trail conditions and backcountry news.

## **When you join Washington Trails Association, you help make hiking trails a guarantee for miles and miles to come.**

Washington Trails Association members play a vital role in preserving our state's wealth of trails by supporting our volunteer program, legislative outreach, and informative publications. Please consider becoming a member today. If you love to hike, you stand to benefit from WTA's work:

**Results On the Ground:** Each year, WTA recruits and trains over 1800 volunteers to maintain hundreds of trail miles throughout Washington, both in the backcountry and in parks closer to home.

**Up-to-Date Trail Information:** You can visit [www.wta.org](http://www.wta.org) for the latest trail conditions. Find your favorite trail in our "Freshest Trip Reports" and learn which flowers are blooming and where the snow level is. Hikers like you file more than 2000 online Trip Reports each year.

**A Political Voice for Washington Hikers:** WTA works closely with elected officials and government staff to secure trail funding, protect wilderness areas, initiate new trail projects, and more.

**A Great Hiking Magazine:** We publish Washington Trails ten times a year and deliver it straight to your mailbox. In every issue, you'll find the latest outdoor recreation news, helpful backpacking advice, and trip reports from across Washington.

Don't wait. Join today! Your membership gift will help maintain old trails, build new trails and ensure that WTA continues speaking out on behalf of hikers like you.

To join, use the envelope provided with this guide, or join online at [www.wta.org](http://www.wta.org).

## **Introduction**

Washington's hiking trails suffered a very difficult year. Last summer, enormous wildfires swept through the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, severely damaging trails. Devastating rainstorms swept across the Cascades, hitting the north Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest the hardest. Some of our most loved hiking trails are totally inaccessible or so damaged that they are unsafe or impossible to hike.

That's why we call them 'endangered.' This year, the Endangered Trails Guide focuses on these trails. Each trail provided a unique opportunity for backcountry recreation and connection with nature that is now gone, at least for the time being.

What will it take to make this situation right? Sweat from the brow of trail volunteers. A critical assessment of why these trails are so important. But most of all, it will take money. The funds needed to repair trails and roads in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie exceed the total annual recreation budget of the entire Forest. Without supplemental money, repairs will take decades.

Damage of this scale cannot be corrected by even the hardest working, best trained, most dedicated group of volunteers-which aptly describes WTA's corps of trail maintenance workers. Congress must stand up and do its part, matching the sweat equity of volunteers with funds to do the work that we simply cannot. Our Senators and members of Congress can fight for the funds to rebuild these trails. See the back pages of this Guide for information on how to contact them.

There has never been a better time to step up and do your part for our trails. We'll be out there, and hope to have you with us.

## Before You Hit The Trail

Hiking is a wonderful way to explore Washington's wildlands, but remember, it is a potentially dangerous activity. Neither the hike descriptions nor the maps contained in this guide should be considered definitive. Please contact the land management agencies cited in the guide for complete and up-to-date information, trail conditions, road quality, etc. The maps provided are for reference only. The following websites offer great trail condition information:

Washington Trails Association: [www.wta.org](http://www.wta.org). Click on Trip Reports  
Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest: [www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs)  
Okanogan Wenatchee National Forest: [www.fs.fed.us/r6/wenatchee](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/wenatchee)  
Olympic National Forest: [www.fs.fed.us/r6/olympic](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/olympic)  
National Park Service: [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)

Before you leave for any hike, no matter how short or simple it seems, stock your pack with the Ten Essentials:

**Extra Clothing:** Prepare for the worst possible climatic conditions, including insulating layers and wind and rain protection.

**Extra Food:** Take more food than you think you'll need, so that if you're stuck out overnight, your supplies will see you through.

**Knife:** Good for first aid or cutting wood.

**Firestarter:** Candle or chemical fuel for lighting wet wood.

**First-Aid Kit:** At a minimum, take Band-aids, aspirin and disinfectant.

**Matches:** Keep them dry with a plastic bag or other waterproof container.

**Flashlight:** In case you're unexpectedly on the trail after dark, pack an extra bulb and batteries.

**Map:** Green Trails, TOPO! or USGS Topographical maps are acceptable. The maps in this book are not.

**Compass:** Know how to at least find north.

**Sunglasses:** They will protect your eyes on sunny days or when you encounter snow.

## Leave No Trace 101

In the 1970s, the sport of backpacking boomed. Back-to-the-landers streamed onto hiking trails all over the country to find quiet and a connection with nature. Unfortunately, all that use has had its impacts. People who have been hiking for decades lament the loss of microbe-free mountain water, and government agencies responsible for our wild places have had to limit access to areas like the Enchantments and the Seven Lakes Basin because of environmental damage. For all these reasons and more, it is important to practice leave-no-trace (LNT) principles no matter where you hike. Here are some general principles and resources:

**Water:** Treat all water with iodine tablets or use a mechanical water purifier. Parasites such as giardia, found in backcountry water worldwide, can cause serious illness. Camp, cook, and wash dishes at least 100 feet from lakes and streams. Only use soap for personal sanitation-when washing dishes, warm water is usually sufficient.

**Campsites:** Take care to camp in areas that have seen previous heavy use. Pristine campsites should stay that way. Lightly used ones should be allowed to rebound. High country plants take decades to grow; don't camp on them. Instead, look for bare rock.

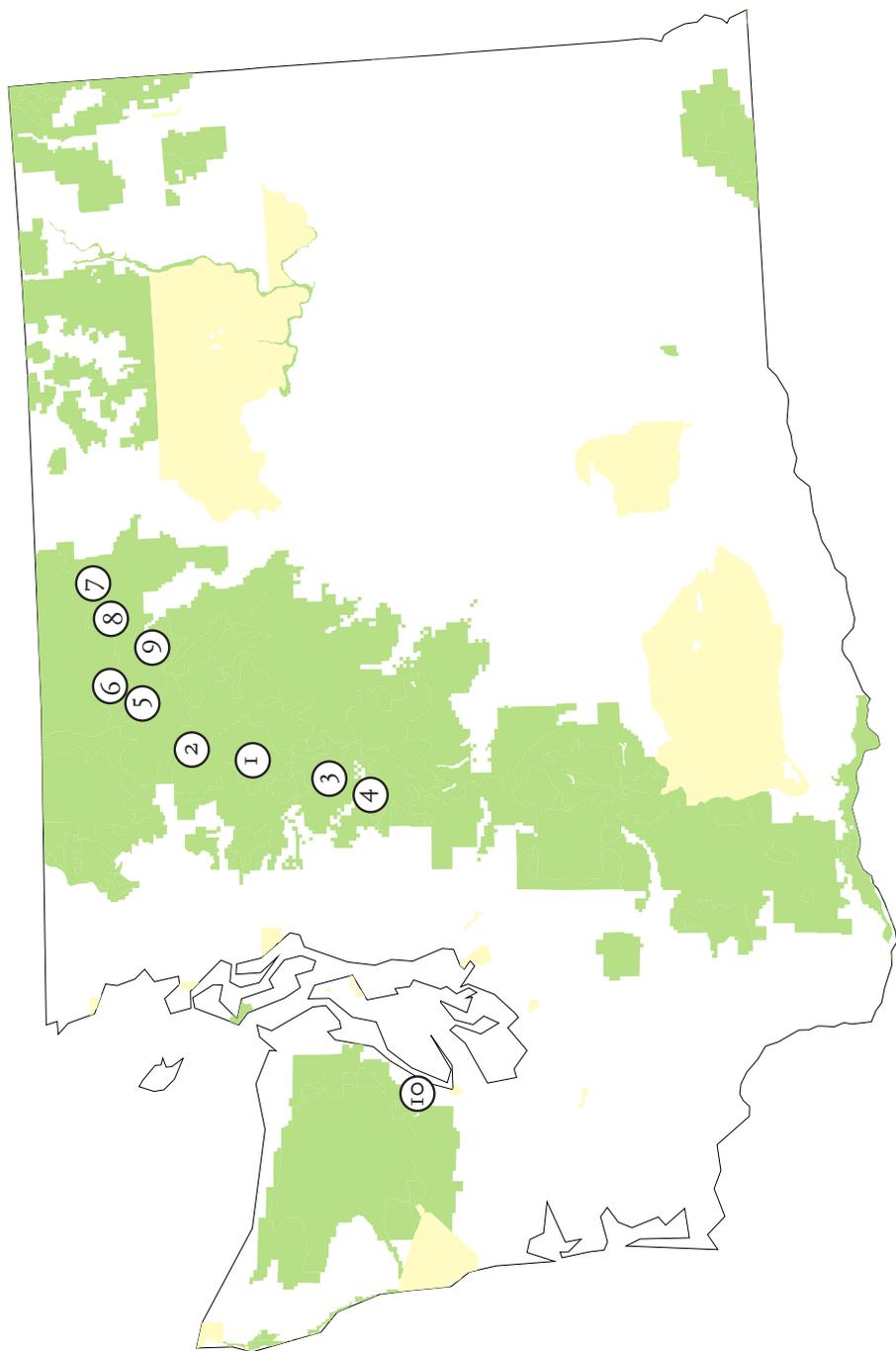
**Wildlife:** Animals are attracted by food smells; prepare meals at least 100 feet from camp, downwind. Either hang all food 12 feet up in a tree, 12 feet from the trunk, or use a bear-resistant container, such as Garcia Machine's product.

**Waste:** Urine is sterile, but salty! In the mountains, pee on rocks rather than heather, to protect plants from salt-loving mountain goats. Bury solid human waste in holes six inches deep. Tampons should be packed out in a double-sealed ziploc bag. Hang the bag as you would hang your food, as the blood smell can attract smaller animals.

**Demeanor:** Except during hunting season, choose earth-toned gear, so that you blend in with your surroundings. Respect others need for quiet; don't make excess noise. When in the wilderness, don't camp too close to other hikers--one reason we go into the woods is to enjoy the expansive aloneness of the outdoors.

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## **Pacific Crest Trail/Suiattle River/Milk Creek Loop**

**Round Trip:** 33 mile loop

**Hiking Time:** 3-5 days

**High Point:** 6000 feet

**Elevation Gain:** 4400 feet

**Best hiking time:** Summer/Fall

**Maps:** Green Trails #112 Glacier Peak

**Getting There:** From Darrington, drive north on State Highway 530 toward Rockport 7.0 miles to the Suiattle River Road #26. Follow this road 22.6 miles to the end of the road. Parking is available at trailhead.

**Whom to Contact:** Darrington Ranger District, (360) 436-1155

Wild and beautiful, this trail leads hikers through a lovely river valley high onto Glacier Peak's north side, and back down into another sweetly flowing stream corridor. This hike is one of the finest long-weekend loops that Washington has to offer, set in the classic backcountry of the Glacier Peak Wilderness.

Starting at the end of the Suiattle River Road (#26), hike the old road to an intersection and turn right, crossing a bridge over Milk Creek. Entering the creek valley is like a little Shangri-La, replete with a grove of old cedars, hemlocks, and douglas firs. The river



North ↑

streams through a broad meadow with a fine camp, and the trail makes occasional ups and downs as it heads toward its intersection with the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) at 7.5 miles.

When you reach the intersection, start heading up. You'll grunt out dozens of switchbacks as you ascend the flower-spangled flanks of Glacier Peak. Amazing views abound up here; the looming hulk of Glacier Peak is just one



Photo by Colin Morgan

of the sights. The valleys run with rivers fed by the mountain's snowmelt; wildflowers in crazy profusion dot the high meadows. Mountains such as Dome Peak and Plummer Mountain rise in the distance, becoming more prominent the higher you get. A climber's trail heads north from here, offering even better views for the hardest hikers.

Heading down slightly again, the trail descends into the Suiattle River valley and follows the stream along a well maintained trail for 11 miles. There's some beautiful old growth on the banks of the river, as well as nice campsites.

### **The Problem**

Much of this loop was damaged in the massive fall storms. Sections of the Suiattle River trail are currently slumping into the river, and the Suiattle River Road (#26) is washed out in two places: milepost 14.5 and milepost 21. Milepost 21 is at Downey Creek; hikers and stock should not try to ford Downey Creek.

Until repairs are made to this section of road, this loop will be inaccessible to hikers. This hike has it all--high country, rivers, old growth, flowers--and is a real loss for hikers all over the Pacific Northwest.

## Middle Cascade River Trail

**Round Trip:** 6.2

**Hiking Time:** 4 hours

**High Point:** 3220 feet

**Elevation Gain:** 1616 feet

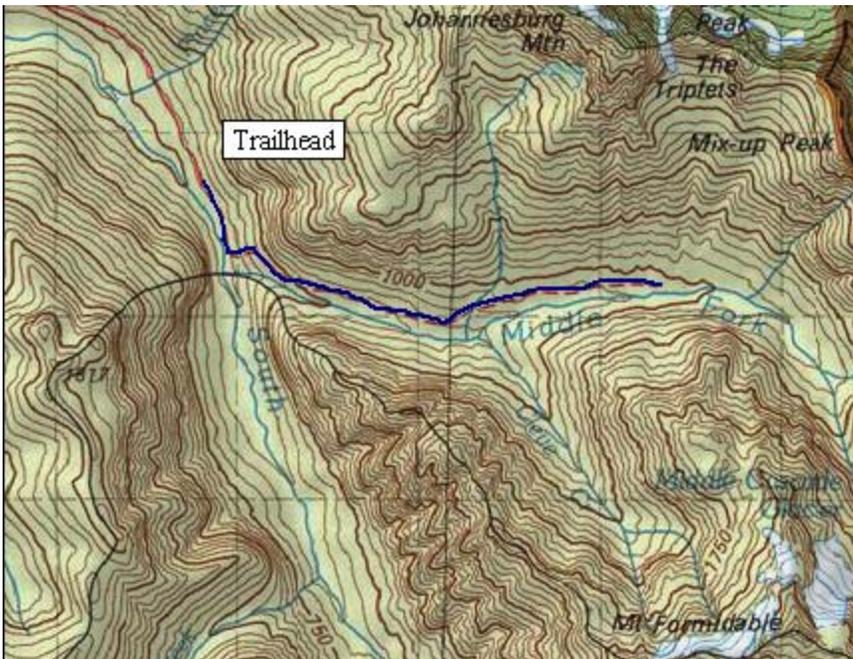
**Best hiking time:** Summer/ Fall

**Maps:** Green Trails #80 Cascade Pass

**Getting There:** From I-5, take exit 230/Anacortes/Burlington.

Follow Highway 20/North Cascades highway east for 46 miles to Marblemount. Turn east on Cascade River Road and follow it approximately 16.5 to South Fork Cascade River Road/Forest Service Road 1590. Turn left and drive to the trailhead at the road's end.

**Whom To Contact:** Mount Baker Ranger District, (360) 856-5700  
The Middle and South Fork Cascade River trails are scenic wonders of the Glacier Peak Wilderness. Spanning two National Forests, Glacier Peak encompasses diverse ecosystems: wet, westside river valleys filled with cedar and sword fern, and the dry ponderosa pine savannahs of the eastern crest. Both sides share devil's club, so watch out!



North ↑

These two valleys are very much in the sword fern-and-cedar category. The Middle Fork is deeper and darker, but oddly gains more elevation. Steep at the start, with the clamorous river to the right, the trail climbs to the lip of a hanging valley, an interesting remnant of the last ice age. The valley has old growth, lots of brush, and some beautiful views just off the trail. There are also numerous camps along the river as well, making this a nice, if somewhat brushy, backpack. The trail ends at around three miles and 3200 feet. Get better views by hiking the gravel bars of the river.



Photo by Alan Bauer

The South Fork gains less elevation, but affords more intense views. The South Fork is loaded with old growth; tall trees abound here. High, icy peaks show through the greenery, visible as long as you can keep your eyes off your feet; this trail, like the Middle Fork, is brushy. There are camps along the river. The trail ends at about three miles from the road, at 2200 feet. The very ambitious can take a hard climber's route six miles to Mertensia Pass, at 5000 feet. This leg is not recommended for any but the strongest hikers.

### **The Problem**

As with many trails in the Mount Baker Ranger District, the Middle and South Fork Cascade River trails are suffering damage from the heavy fall and winter rains. A bridge is out on the South Fork, and the Middle Fork was very heavily damaged by both floods and fire. The trails are nearly unhikeable.

## Whitechuck Bench Trail

**Round Trip:** 13 miles

**Hiking Time:** 11 hours

**High Point:** 1600 feet

**Elevation Gain:** 600 feet

**Best hiking time:** Summer/ Fall

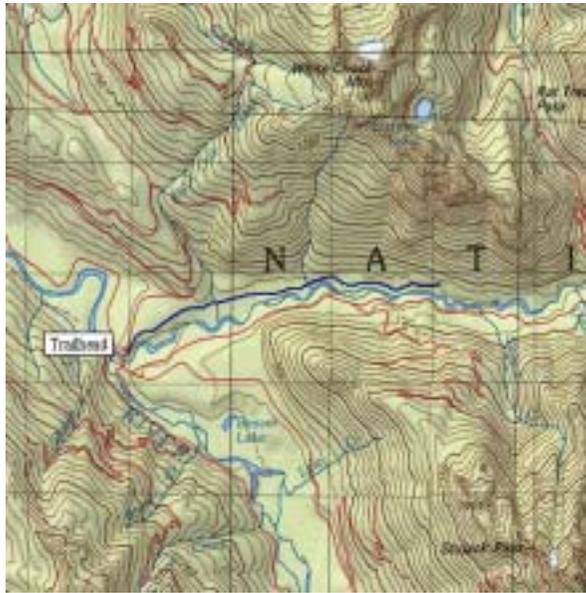
**Maps:** Green Trails #111 Sloan Peak

**Getting There:** From Darrington, take the Mountain Loop Highway 10 miles to the White Chuck River Road on the left (east). Follow this road for 5.5 miles. The trailhead is on the left just after crossing the White Chuck River.

**Whom To Contact:** Darrington Ranger District, (360)436-1155

Less well known than the White Chuck River trail, White Chuck Bench affords a little more solitude and a slightly more intense Wilderness experience.

This is one of those lovely green / red / brown trails that hikers who spend time in the Darrington Ranger District know well--green undergrowth, red cedar, and dark brown soil blend into



North ↑

a sweet earthy mix, delighting the eye. The trail starts in second-growth forest which grows thickly together. Splash through many little streams that cross the path, and look for signs of old timber operations. The trail departs second-growth for old-growth eventually, with some truly magnificent cedars lining the path.

After crossing Black Oak Creek, the trail winds through trees with

mountain views peeking through. Hikers getting to the end of the trail (6.5 miles) will find themselves high enough to get some breathtaking mountain views: Mount Pugh and White Chuck Mountain are arrayed in all their glory.



Photo by Dave Morgan

### **The Problem**

The massive storms that hit the Darrington Ranger District in late October 2003 caused huge damage on the roads and trails of this district. The White Chuck road is washed out, and the trail has slid out in numerous areas. Washouts and slides are normal occurrences in a wet range like the Cascades, but there was nothing normal about the October storms and the attendant damage. This weather was extreme, and piled one slide and washout on another. The cost of repairing this damage far exceeds the total annual maintenance budget for the entire Forest.

## Peek-a-Boo Lake

**Round Trip:** 6 miles

**Hiking Time:** 3 hours

**High Point:** 4000 feet

**Elevation Gain:** 800 feet

**Best hiking time:** Summer/ Fall

**Maps:** Green Trails #110 Silverton

**Getting There:** From Darrington, take the Mountain Loop Highway #20 along the west side of the Sauk River for 9.2 miles to road #2080. Turn right (west) and follow this road for 1 mile to road #2081. Follow this road to road #2086 (a sharp switchback about 1.6 miles beyond Dutch Creek) on the left. Trailhead is at the road end.

**Whom to Contact:** Darrington Ranger District, (360) 436-1155

Peek-A-Boo Lake gives hikers a nice, steady climb to beautiful meadows and views and an exquisite little alpine lake with great camping opportunities. It's short enough to do as an easy 2-day, introduction-to-backpacking trip.

Peek-A-Boo Lake starts as an old logging road, heading up slightly



North ↑

for about 1/3 mile. Once it enters old forest, it becomes a trail. Some of the trees show signs of old timber operations.

From here, hikers will head up, up, and up to 4300 feet. The trail becomes easier from this point, leading to a lovely pond surrounded by meadowland. Across the meadow loom views of Mount Pugh, White Chuck Mountain, Dome Peak, Mount Shuksan, and the White Chuck River. Once out of the meadow, a short path heads down to Peek-A-Boo Lake and camps, at 3900 feet.

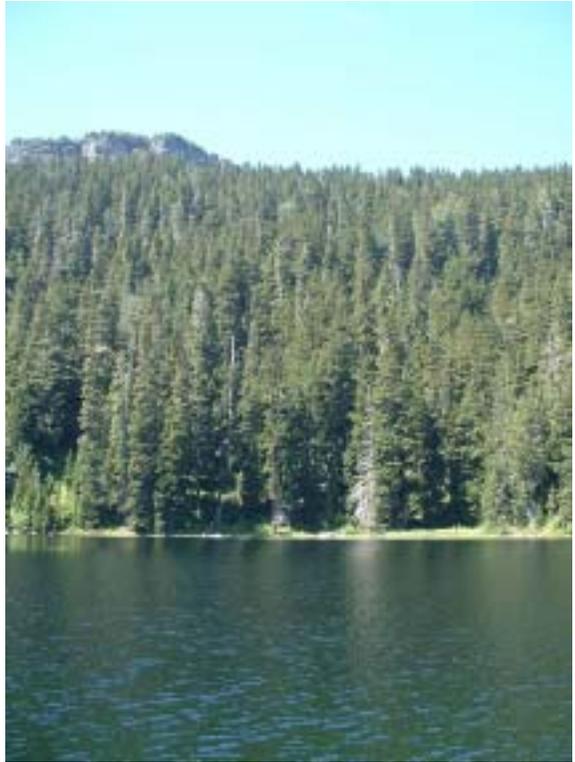


Photo by Andrew Engleson

### **The Problem**

The Mountain Loop Highway is washed out at both milepost 35.6, and near Elliot Creek. The Highway is also damaged by flooding and is one lane in several spots with stop signs posted. The Mountain Loop is inaccessible at 18.6 miles from Darrington with washouts on both sides of Road 4080.

While these washouts primarily impact the Elliot Creek/Goat Lake trail, the road from the Mountain Loop to the Peek-A-Boo trailhead is also washed out. These trails are yet another example of trail access caused by severe weather this year.

## Thunder Creek

**Round Trip:** 36 miles to Park Creek Pass

**Hiking Time:** 3-5 days

**Elevation Gain:** 5600 feet

**High Point:** 6040 feet

**Best Hiking Time:** Summer/Fall

**Maps:** Green Trails #48 Diablo Dam, #49 Mount Logan, #81 McGregor Mountain

**Getting There:** Drive Highway 20 to Diablo Dam and continue 4 miles to Colonial Creek Campground, where the trailhead is located.

**Whom to Contact:** North Cascades National Park, (360)856-5700

Thunder Creek is wild, deep, and fast. High glaciers drain into the creek bed, birthing a cataract that flows 18 miles into Diablo Lake. Lined with ancient forest, the trail starts out easy but finally heads up into classic North Cascades alpine scenery. Thunder Creek Trail is one of the finest hikes in the North Cascades.

The first portion of this hike is essentially flat, meandering next to Thunder Creek through a nice forest of old-growth Douglas fir, hemlock, and cedar. The views here are occasional. Here and there a snow clad peak will reveal itself through the forest deeps. Fire breaks along the trail also afford nice



North ↑

views. You'll pass numerous camps here, so this section is ideal for an early season backpack. Typically, it's snow free by April.

The trail climbs 1000 feet about one mile after entering North Cascades National Park. After Fisher Creek, the trail starts to climb in earnest. Heading up steadily, the trail opens up, with views increasing into the valley, as well as of nearby peaks such as Tricouni and Primus. More elevation gain along the trail equals more alpine beauty, with views of Boston Glacier, Mount Forbidden and Mount Buckner



Photo by Alan Bauer

steadily growing. Dropping 800 feet and then gaining it back, the trail heads to Skagit Queen Camp. The trail continues to climb to Thunder Basin Camp, the last official camp. Follow the trail another 2.5 miles to Park Creek Pass.

### **The Problem**

Many bridges along this hike are simply gone. Within a short distance from the trailhead, a major bridge across Thunder Creek has washed into the Thunder Arm of Diablo Lake. Thunder Creek is deep and strong; do not attempt to ford this stream. Beyond that, bridges at Fisher Creek and McAllister Creek Camps are washed out. The Skagit Queen bridge survived the floodwaters that took these other bridges out.

Combined with damage in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie, damage in North Cascades National Park will stretch federal appropriations for trails thin for years to come.

## Little Beaver Creek

**Round Trip:** 26 miles

**Hiking Time:** 3 days

**Elevation Gain:** 3500 feet

**High Point:** 5250 feet

**Best Hiking Time:** Summer/Fall

**Maps:** Green Trails #15 Mt. Challenger, #16 Ross Lake

**Getting There:** Drive Highway 20 to Diablo Dam and continue past the Colonial Creek Campground 3.8 miles to the Ross Lake trailhead. Follow the trail to Ross Lake Resort and take a taxi from there.

**Whom to Contact:** North Cascades National Park, (360)856-5700

This outing can be a hike in its own right--a wonderful in-and-out over two days. Or hikers can add a day or two to their trip and do a 26.5-mile loop by adding the Big Beaver trail. Either way, hikers will enjoy a wonderful North Cascades sampler of stately ancient forest, pristine streams, and unparalleled mountain views.

Ride up Ross Lake to Little Beaver Landing, elevation 1600 feet. A steep set of switchbacks takes hikers 800 feet to the top of a canyon-elevation which is swiftly lost. The trail intersects with numerous creeks along the way. Perry Creek at 4.5 miles has a nice camp, as well as lots of fords or footlog crossings--none of which are terribly challenging. Cross Redoubt Creek at 9 miles; hope for a footlog.



North ↑

Join the Big Beaver Trail at 11.5 miles for the full 26 mile Big Beaver/Little Beaver loop.

Continue 6 more miles on the Little Beaver Creek Trail to get to Whatcom Pass. Hikers gain 2800 feet from here in a long series of switchbacks. The trip is worth it; views from Whatcom Pass are beyond compare. For those with time on their hands, this hike can be considered the first leg of a 38 mile cross-Park hike--one of the premiere trips in the North Cascades.



Photo by Douglas Diekema

### **The Problem**

As with Thunder Creek, the Little Beaver Creek Trail's problem is a lost bridge. The bridge over Little Beaver Creek at mile 10.4 near Stilwell Camp was swept away in the fall storms. This crossing is dangerous in high water. In low water, hikers should keep their eyes peeled for shallow, safer crossings. There is also extensive trail damage on Little Beaver, with routefinding necessary in between miles four and nine.

## Andrews Creek

**Round Trip:** 42 miles

**Hiking Time:** 5-7 days

**High Point:** 7400 feet

**Elevation Gain:** 5300 feet cumulative

**Best hiking time:** Summer/Fall

**Maps:** Green Trails #20 Coleman Peak

**Getting There:** From Winthrop travel on State Route 20 and turn right onto Okanogan County Road 1213 (West Chewuch Road).

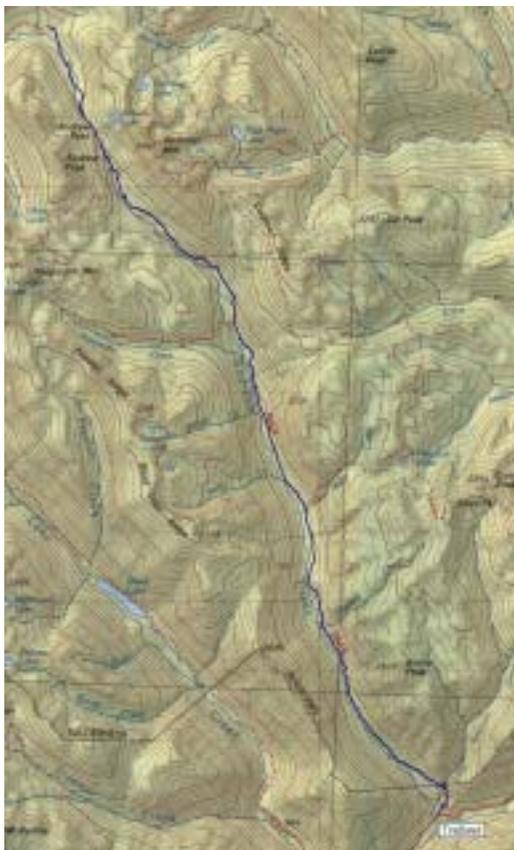
Drive 6 miles where county road joins with Forest Service Road 51 for 15 miles to the end of the paved road, then turn right for parking at the Andrews Creek Trailhead (some parking to the left).

**Whom to Contact:** Methow Valley Ranger District, (509) 996-4003

Hikers traversing this trail will alternate between flat and up, flat and up on the way to ice-polished slabs on the shores of Upper Cathedral Lake, with Cathedral Peak looming in the background. This hike is horsey, used frequently by outfitter guides heading into the Pasayten Wilderness backcountry. You'll encounter significant dust and frequent horse-apples. Still, its charms are manifold, and the presence of heavy stock here keeps the nearby Lake Creek Trail a hiker haven.

The trail starts out steep, then evens out, with the exception of some quick,

tight ups along the way. At four miles, stay left at a fork in the trail,



North ↑

and head up a steep hillside. At 8 miles, you head up hard into Andrews Pass, which tops out at 6700 feet.

Dropping into the Spanish Creek valley at 15 miles, you'll finally break into meadows and tundra-like country with colossal views. Camp here or near the intersection with the Boundary Trail. Cathedral Lake and Rimmel Lake have camps, but they're small and often loaded with stock.

Six more miles and Cathedral Lake emerges. Glaciers have been at work here, grinding the granite shore into smooth, polished planes. Side trips abound, including a hike to Lower Cathedral Lake and a hike along the Boundary trail to still more tundra and wildflowers. Take your time here.



Photo by Laurie Dowie

### **The Problem**

For the past three summers, massive fires have swept through the Okanogan, burning and felling trees, destroying trail tread, and taking out bridges. As of this writing, Andrews and Lake Creek are still closed. Like all Forests in Washington, money simply does not exist to do the needed maintenance on this trail. Until the trail planning and maintenance team on the Okanogan-Wenatchee is given the support it needs at the federal level, these trails will remain closed and dangerous.

## Lake Creek

**Round Trip:** 8.5 miles

**Hiking Time:** 4 hours

**High Point:** 3982 feet (Black Lake)

**Elevation Gain:** 800 feet

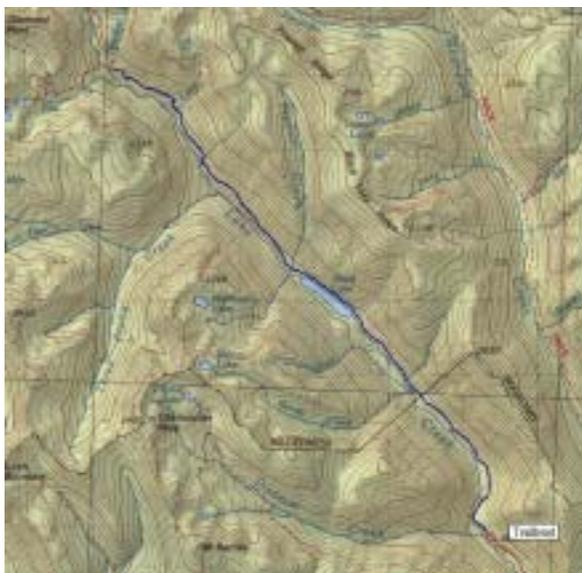
**Best Hiking Time:** Late Spring/Fall

**Maps:** Green Trails #20 Coleman Peak

**Getting there:** From Winthrop take Okanogan County Road 1213 (West Chewuch Road) north about 6 miles to where it joins with Forest Service Road #51. Continue north. Just after the Lake Creek bridge, turn left on FS Road #51-100 and drive 2 miles to the Lake Creek Trailhead.

**Whom to Contact:** Methow Valley Ranger District, (509)996-4003

Lake Creek is the drainage just to the east of Andrews Creek. Given that Andrews is so heavily used by stock, Lake Creek is more appropriate for hikers who don't wish to share a trail with horses or other stock. This is one of the most heavily used trails in the Pasayten Wilderness, but most folks don't often go past Black Lake.



North ↑

Hikers heading into the higher reaches beyond Black Lake will be treated to relative solitude.

Staying level and close to the river practically the whole way to Black Lake, the trail is lined with old timber, and, in season, loaded with huckleberries and raspberries. Twinflower, tiger lilies, and wild roses bloom all along the trail, with paintbrush and columbine scattered

among them. Campsites are lovely along the river, with openings for sun and lots of space.

The trail grows brushy as it nears Black Lake, which is a mile long and ringed by yet more old forest and rolling, tree-clad mountains. The lake is intensely popular, so hikers won't have much time to themselves here.

Beyond the lake hikers will enjoy moresparsely used areas of the Pasayten, including the charming Fawn Lake. From here the whole Wilderness spreads out before the hardy hiker, available for rambles both long and short.



Photo by Alan Bauer

### **The Problem**

As with the West Fork Methow and Andrews Creek, Lake Creek was heavily damaged in the fires over the past couple of summers and, as of this printing, is now closed. This is a serious loss. It is one of the trails in the Pasayten Wilderness that is less frequently used by equestrians, and so it is generally more pleasant for hikers than Andrews Creek.

It's also one of those wonderful rarities in Washington: an early-melting, easy-hiking, day-trip or backpack, with a lake visit, or long Wilderness ramble trail. In other words, it's versatile. Hikers itching to get out early could usually count on Lake Creek, one of a few hikes of this type. Until Congress matches the importance of this hike with the funds necessary to keep it open, then we are one great hike poorer.

## West Fork Methow River

**Round Trip:** 12 miles

**Hiking Time:** 6 hours

**Elevation Gain:** 900 feet

**High Point:** 3600 feet

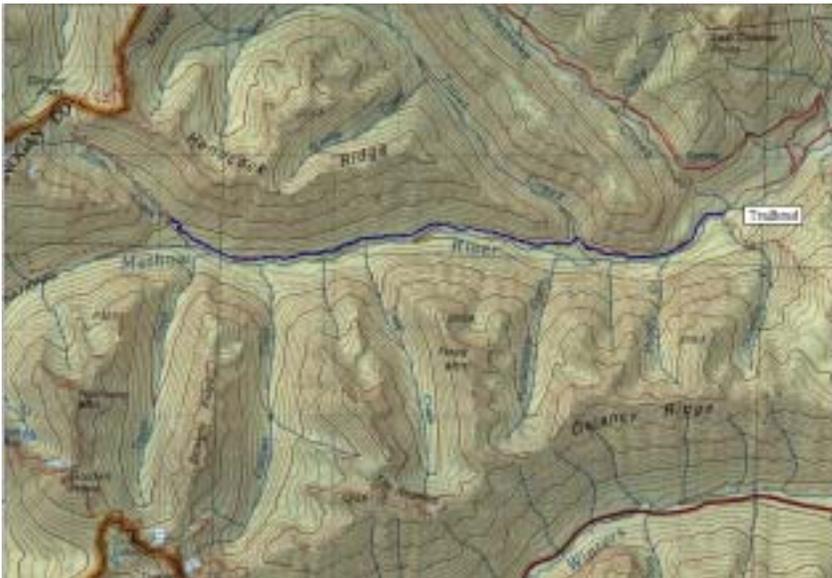
**Best hiking time:** Early Summer/ Fall

**Maps:** Green Trails #50 Washington Pass

**Getting There:** From Mazama, head up the valley on the Hart's Pass road 9 miles to a junction. Head left on Road #(5400)060, marked "Riverbed Campground" about 1 mile to the road's end and trailhead.

**Whom to Contact:** Methow Valley Ranger District, (509)996-4003  
Melting out early, the West Fork Methow River trail takes you to some of the prettiest country in the Okanogan-Wenatchee. It's a fantastic early season hike, mellow in terms of elevation gain, rambling close to the river, and loaded with wildflowers in early spring.

This is one of those hikes that, although relatively easy, feels a little roller-coasterish with lots of little ups and downs. Dry side forests abound with fir and ponderosa pine. The West Fork Methow is happy company all along the trail, even when hikers head up above



North ↑

the river to skirt big rock piles. Camps are great along the way, at both 2 and 3 miles in. The trail starts to leave the river at about 4 miles and heads up completely at 6 miles.

Hikers can either turn around here, or continue to the Pacific Crest Trail junction at 7 miles.

Heading south along the Pacific Crest Trail takes hikers to even greater rewards--this way lies Golden Horn with its shining pink-gold granodiorite, and other reaches of the Okanogan.



Photo by Dave Schiefelbein

### **The Problem**

Like many trails in the Okanogan, the West Fork Methow River Trail is closed and dangerous. Fires raging in the Okanogan have created numerous hazards, ranging from burned trees on the brink of falling to trails crusted over cavities that could break a hiker's ankle. Additionally, loose ash and burned soils load streams with silt which is very bad for fish species that depend on clear, cold water.

Dealing with these hazards will be a difficult and expensive proposition. This is exactly the sort of challenge that the Forest Service does not need at a time when its budget is in decline and long-term staff are retiring. Elected officials and the Forest Service at the federal level need to prioritize repairing and reopening this and other backcountry routes.

## South Fork Skokomish River

**Round Trip:** 18 miles

**Hiking Time:** 2 days

**Elevation Gain:** 3200 feet

**High Point:** 3800 feet

**Best Hiking Time:** Summer/Fall

**Maps:** Green Trails #166 Mount Christie, #167 Mount Steel, #199 Mount Tebo

**Getting There:** Travel 6 miles north of Shelton on Hwy 101 and turn west on the Skokomish Valley Road. Continue 5 miles to FS Road #23. Turn right and continue for 9 miles to FS Road #2353. Turn right onto FS Road #2353 and drive 1.0 mile to the trailhead.

**Whom to Contact:** Hood Canal Ranger District, (360)877-5254

The southeast corner of Olympic National Forest has seen quite a bit of logging. Stands of old growth remaining in the Forest are few, and when one of those stands is accessible by trail and runs along the bank of a wild river, hikers should consider themselves lucky.

The South Fork Skokomish River trail is an example of remaining wild forest in the midst of this intensively managed landscape. Starting in a timber cut that is beginning to grow in, the trail soon enters a stretch of more soothing old growth as it continues along the river. For the most part, the trail hugs the river's course offering lots



North ↑

of opportunities for lunches on the bank overhung with old trees.

After a small up at the beginning, the trail evens out for the first 2.5 miles or so. The rest of the trail is a constant up and down, gaining 50 feet here, losing 100 feet there before entering the National Park at 9 miles. There are camps along the river, which runs very clear--a surprise, considering the timber activity that has taken place in this area for years.



Photo by Dave Schiefelbein

Forest managers with foresight saw fit to leave old trees standing along the Skokomish. Hikers will pass a couple of logging sites--small and not clearcuts--by the river. Beyond those small examples, though, the trees have been beautifully preserved, with many as large as 6 feet in diameter.

### **The Problem**

There is a lot of water on this trail. Muddy in many places, slumping in others, this trail is in rough condition. Last fall's storms took out a trail bridge, as well as about 150 feet of trail. A rough, temporary detour has been cut around this slump, but it's only a short-term fix. The Forest needs money to repair the bridge and relocate this lost section of trail.

Olympic National Forest has lost a lot of talented staff over the last year. Trail designers and volunteer coordinators such as Mark Wamsley, Scott Burgwin, and Steve Ricketts have all left the agency after decades of faithful service, taking with them an enormous amount of experience and expertise. On top of that loss, there is simply no money available to replace these staff.

# **TAKE ACTION! Elected Officials' Contact Information**

## **Senators**

Name: Patty Murray  
Phone: (202) 224-2621  
Fax: (202) 224-0238

Name: Maria Cantwell  
Phone: (202) 224-3441  
Fax: (202) 228-0514

## **Representatives**

### **Jay Inslee-1st Dist.**

Phone: (202) 225-6311  
Fax: (202) 225-3524

### **Jennifer Dunn-8th Dist.**

Phone: (202) 225-7761  
Fax: (202) 225-8673

### **Rick Larsen-2nd Dist.**

Phone: (202) 225-2605  
Fax: (202) 225-4420

### **Adam Smith-9th Dist.**

Phone: (202) 225-8901  
Fax: (202) 225-5893

### **Brian Baird-3rd Dist.**

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### **Doc Hastings-4th Dist.**

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Fax: (202) 225-3251

### **George Nethercutt-5th Dist.**

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Fax: (202) 225-3392

### **Norman Dicks-6th Dist.**

Phone: (202) 225-5916  
Fax: (202) 226-1176

### **James McDermott-7th Dist.**

Phone: (202) 225-3106  
Fax: (202) 553-7175

## **National Parks**

### **North Cascades National Park**

2105 Highway 20  
Sedro Woolley, WA 98284  
(360) 865-5700

### **Olympic National Park**

3002 Mt. Angeles Rd  
Port Angeles, WA 98362  
(360) 565-3130

### **Mount Rainier National Park**

Tahoma Woods, Star Route  
Ashford, WA 98304-9751  
(360) 569-2211 XT 3314

## **National Forests**

### **Colville National Forest**

765 S Main St  
Colville, WA 99114  
(509) 684-7000

### **Gifford Pinchot National Forest**

10600 NE 51 Circle  
Vancouver, WA 98682  
(360) 891-5001

### **Mount Baker-Snoqualmie**

National Forest  
21905 64th Ave W  
Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043  
(425) 775-9702

### **Okanogan-Wenatchee**

National Forest  
215 Melody Lane  
Wenatchee, WA 98801  
(509) 662-4335

### **Olympic National Forest**

1835 Black Lake Blvd SW  
Olympia, WA 98502  
(360) 956-2400

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