

# It's TIME... REOPEN "THE WAY THROUGH" TO MORE THAN A VERY FEW.

# STEHEKIN



TRAPPER LAKE



STEHEKIN RIVER ROAD  
SUMMER 2007



HORSESHOE DRAINAGE



HORSE SHOE BASIN SUMMER 2007

YOUR ABILITY TO ACCESS THE UPPER VALLEY STEHEKIN ROAD, *GATEWAY TO THE NORTH CASCADES*,  
HAS BEEN SEVERELY LIMITED BY A RECENT NATIONAL PARK SERVICE DECISION.

# Reopen “The Way Through” To More Than A Very Few

Throughout history Stehekin has been a way through the heart of the rugged and sheer North Cascade mountain range. Used by Native Americans, explorers, trappers, miners, homesteaders, and now hikers and beauty seekers, the Stehekin Valley is a pathway of unparalleled beauty. The valley remains remote because there are no outside roads leading into it, but once visitors reached the valley, usually by boat, they had long been able to access the upper reaches of this awe inspiring place by catching a ride on a Park Service shuttle bus up a primitive but remarkable road. Once at the end of the road, they could experience the extreme grandeur of places like Horseshoe Basin, Cascade Pass and Trapper Lake.

In 1958, Sierra Club’s David R. Brower rented a vehicle at the Stehekin landing and drove his sons and camping gear along the 21-mile Stehekin Valley Road. Driving along the narrow road, their excitement must have been tangible. These adventurers were on their way to discover the incredible grandeur of the North Cascades. They had another task as well. They were filming a movie entitled, “Wilderness Alps of Stehekin.” This movie was then promoted by the Sierra Club and local environmental groups to elevate the idea of creating a vast National Park Complex in the North Cascades of Washington State.

Arriving at the Cottonwood Campground the Browsers still had plenty of hiking ahead of them, but because they were able to drive (a raucously bumpy ride for sure) to the end of the road, they were able to

*In the challenging era we live, the opportunity to refresh the body and inspire the soul is as essential in 2018 as it was in 1958.*

access awe-inspiring vistas unavailable in the lower valley. The ability to access the heart of the North Cascades along the 23 mile Stehekin Valley Road made a deep and positive impression on the Browsers.

Narrating the “Wilderness Alps of Stehekin” movie, David describes the North Cascades as “a crown jewel of American scenic grandeur” . . . “unsurpassed anywhere in the United States.” Beyond the praise heaped on the natural setting, David paid tribute to the primitive road his family drove along to reach the Cottonwood Campground. “The road starts at a handsome lake shore and dead-ends in Paradise.” The paradise David spoke of included the tumbling waterfalls of Horseshoe Basin with its ring of rugged, majestic peaks easily accessible from Cottonwood. Unfortunately, the recreational access corridor David and his sons drove along in 1958 is no longer available to valley visitors in 2008.

The Sierra Club and others promoting National Park legislation used the “Wilderness Alps of Stehekin” as a tool to influence elected officials and gain public support concerning the importance of creating a National Park Complex in the heart of the Cascades. The two predominant themes characterized in the movie were preservation and public use and enjoyment. “Wilderness Alps of Stehekin” promoted a vision and a promise. The vision was that public lands would be set aside for environmental protection. The promise was that Americans would continue to have access to the heart of the Cascades.

Citizens supporting these ideals influenced elected officials to pass legislation creating the North Cascades National Park Complex.

All legislation for this area calls for the preservation of the resource, as well as, the continuation of public access along the Upper Stehekin Valley Road. Legislative history specifically documents the importance of maintaining the primitive road used by David Brower and his sons. Unfortunately, because of the flood of 2003 and the subsequent NPS road closure, most people visiting Stehekin today will be unable to access upper valley trails and campgrounds.

*The purpose of this publication is to advocate for reopening the Upper Stehekin Valley Road as an essential access corridor into the North Cascades.*

Stehekin Heritage believes citizens of all ages and physical ability should have the opportunity to access the upper Stehekin Valley and be inspired by the grandeur of this magnificent setting. In the challenging era we live, the opportunity to refresh the body and inspire the soul is as essential in 2008 as it was in 1958.

David Brower voiced this same sentiment fifty years ago. Narrating the summary of his movie David stated, “You have a right to discover it, I told Ken and Bob (Brower’s sons) and your children and theirs too, just as we did.”

All Americans have the right to discover the heart of the Cascades just as the Browsers did fifty years ago. It’s time to reopen the Upper Stehekin Valley Road - *The Way Through* - to more than a very few. Stehekin Heritage hopes you will support efforts to reopen the Upper Stehekin Valley Road.



Stehekin School Students with Ron Scutt @ Horseshoe Basin Drainage

**Stehekin Heritage invites you to support: Reopening the historical Upper Stehekin Valley Road closed by extreme flooding in 2003... see back page**

Ron Scutt, President  
Stehekin Heritage  
Box 1  
Stehekin WA 98852  
[stehekinheritage1@gmail.com](mailto:stehekinheritage1@gmail.com)

“IF YOUNG CHILDREN ARE DENIED ACCESS TODAY, WHO WILL BE THE ARDENT SUPPORTERS OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE WILDERNESS TOMORROW?”

~ JUDITH A. GUSTAFSON ~



# Why?... It's reasonable to open the Upper Valley Road...

\*THE STEHEKIN RIVER ROAD IS NOT CONNECTED TO ANY OTHER ROAD... IT IS NOT A THOROUGHFARE.

\*ONLY 3 MILES OF THE STEHEKIN RIVER ROAD NEEDS TO BE REPAIRED...

\*THE ALREADY EXISTING "OLD WAGON ROAD" COULD BE USED AS THE ALTERNATIVE SITE FOR THE THREE MILES THAT HAVE BEEN WASHED OUT ON THE STEHEKIN RIVER ROAD...

\*THE STEHEKIN RIVER ROAD IS USED BY THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SHUTTLE, NOT BY ATVs AND SNOWMOBILES.....

## TRAIL HEADS FORMERLY ACCESSIBLE FROM ROAD BY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SHUTTLE...

- \*BRIDGE CREEK\*
- \*CASCADE PASS\*
- \*DOUBTFUL LAKE....\*
- \*FLAT CREEK\*
- \*GOODE RIDGE\*
- \*HORSESHOE BASIN\*
- \*NORTH FORK BRIDGE CREEK\*
- \*PARK CREEK PASS\*
- \*SAHALE ARM (CASCADE PASS)\*
- \*TRAPPER LAKE\*

*See back page if you would like to help...*

*What do we lose? We lose a journey to Horseshoe Basin that affords a beautiful, sweeping view of the highest interior Cascades. We lose a journey to Cascade Pass where we can witness alpine magic growing under glacier topped peaks. We lose access to Bridge Creek campground, a family friendly area that serves as base camp for fishing, hiking, and enjoyment of the wilderness for even the very young. We lose a route that Indians first traveled and created, miners improved (with the crudest of tools), Forest Service maintained, and the Park Service took over with the legal directive that this route was permanently part of our heritage.*

*~Liz Courtney~*

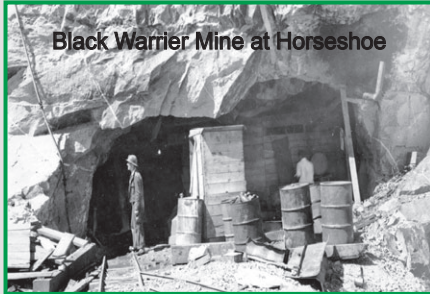


*"FROM REVIEWING THE STUDY, IT TRULY APPEARS TO ME THAT THE GOAL OF THE PARK SERVICE IS TO CLOSE THE PARK TO ALL BUT THE PHYSICALLY ELITE AND TO THOSE WHO HAVE NO LIMITS ON THE AMOUNT OF TIME AVAILABLE TO EXPLORE AND VISIT THE NORTH CASCADES...TO ADOPT ANY OF THE PROPOSALS SET FORTH IGNORES THE HISTORY OF THE VALLEY, ASSUMES FACTS WHICH ARE SIMPLY NOT TRUE, AND ATTEMPTS TO PROTECT WILDLIFE WHICH HAS NEVER IN RECORDED HISTORY BEEN A PART OF THE STEHEKIN VALLEY."*

*~ CARL GANS ~*

# Historical Overview Of “The Way Through”

Stehekin is based on a Native American word, meaning “The Way Through.” The Stehekin River Valley has a very long history of being used as a passage. It originally was part of a travel route linking the tribes of the Puget Sound and Skagit areas with those of the Columbia River Plateau. Groups traded goods across the mountains through Cascade Pass. Canoes at the head of Lake Chelan carried travelers the last miles out to the Columbia River and plateau.



**Black Warrior Mine at Horseshoe**

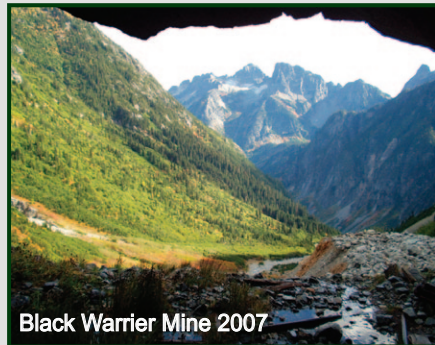
Mining activity brought the first permanent white settlers into the Stehekin Valley. In the last part of the 19th century, prospectors began exploring for mineral wealth. They found gold, silver, lead and copper ore. Many a prospector and interested party visited the Stehekin Valley during this era, carried to the upper reaches often by way of horseback and pack train along a trail leading to early claims concentrated in the vicinities of Doubtful Lake and Horseshoe Basin at the head of the Stehekin Valley.

“It was primarily the discoveries of these early prospectors of the large veins of silver-lead galena ores in the Horseshoe Basin, Park Creek and Bridge Creek areas of the upper Stehekin Valley that brought so many people here at this time. By the next summer more people had flooded in to the upper Lake Chelan and Stehekin area than at any other one time since.” (p. 39 “Lake Chelan in the 1890’s.” Byrd, Robert)

In 1899, most of the “wagon road” from Stehekin to Bridge Creek was built to accommodate a mine to market route. Later the river road was built using CC labor and was in use until 2003. With the exception of the crude and often steep access to the mines, road building never went much beyond 23 miles past the Boat Landing. Several plans to link the valley with the outside by roadway over Cascade Pass were pursued but never occurred. Even though a roadway would never follow the entire “way through” by way of Cascade Pass, an established road now opened up the area for people to visit the Stehekin Valley for more reasons than prospecting. Read from Carol Stone’s “Stehekin: Glimpses of the Past” and find several stunning accounts of pack trips through the heart of the Cascades, enjoyed by early travelers for the sole purpose of discovering breathtaking beauty.



“No human can look out upon this great mountain upheaval, this panorama of cliffs and cataracts, and crags and glaciers and mineral deposits without being awed into reverent contemplation of the almighty power which wrought this majestic and sublimely beautiful picture,” wrote DeWitt Britt, a writer in the company of twenty eight others traveling to Horseshoe Basin in 1893 along the valley road.



**Black Warrior Mine 2007**

The lower Stehekin Valley became home to a few homesteading families, settlers, miners, packers, and hotel owners. A small settlement was based at Bridge Creek as well. The road was the lifeline for all the early settlers providing an artery to their lands, their mines, and their income of transporting the visiting public into the majestic scenery beyond. Many tourists traveled the lake, spent the night in hotels such as the Field hotel, one of the most well known destination resorts in the Pacific Northwest at the time, and then proceeded to ride horseback with a packer into the high country along the road.



In 1943, a passable road reached Horseshoe Basin with the aid of state appropriations. The lands surrounding the road were eventually governed by the US Forest Service. In 1968, the lands came under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. The road remained the access to the high country and several trailheads and campgrounds.

Much has changed in the Stehekin Valley since the pioneering days, but the “old ways of life” have not totally disappeared. The Stehekin River Road is still the lifeline of the Valley. Children of homesteading families continue to live in the valley and make a living providing services for the visiting public; leading pack trips, providing up lake transportation by barge, managing the Stehekin Valley Ranch, operating the Stehekin Pastry Company, offering guided raft trips on the Stehekin River, offering expertise in photography, providing unique and beautiful rental homes and cabins, and horseback rides.

The vitality of this little mountain community and the well being of the residents and visitors depend in large part on the ability to access the inspirational and historical upper Stehekin Road. “The Way Through” is a unique passageway that ties us not only to unsurpassed beauty, but also to meaningful American historical footsteps.



**Stehekin River**

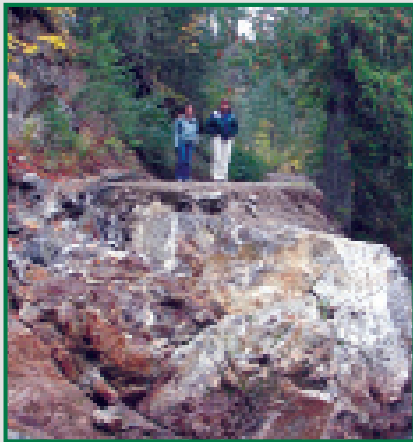


**Curt's bus  
at Carwash  
Falls**

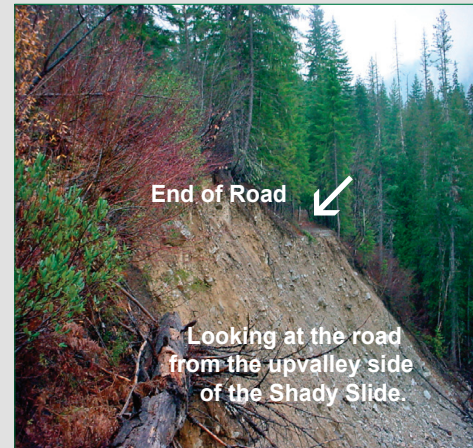
*We want the National Park Service to honor the commitment stated in the Wilderness Act... Reopen the Upper Stehekin River Road and give the American Public access to the North Cascades Wilderness once again.*



# Loss of visitor access since National Park Service closure of the Upper Stehekin Valley Road



*“Even with the GMP directive to maintain vehicular access into the park, it appears that the NPS used the 2003 flood event as a way to impose NPS administrative preference to close the road rather than creatively searching for ways to provide public access as required by Congress when it passed the WSWA of 1988.”*



## National Park Service General Management Plan

Passengers on the NPS buses include visitors, residents, of the Stehekin Valley and NPS personnel using the transportation to perform their duties. Backpackers, day hikers, and campers ride to and from 15 trailheads and 12 camping areas along the Stehekin Valley Road. These visitors often use the morning shuttle to reach an upvalley trailhead and hike to a new location to meet a returning bus or catch one from the same stop. Other visitors ride the shuttle up and down the valley as a scenic tour. Total ridership on the system from 1985 through 1991 was 55,083. This is an average of 7,869 passengers per year with an average of 7 passengers for each one-way shuttle trip.

Pg. 230: Shuttle Bus Ridership. Access and Transportation, National Park Service Shuttle Bus System from, National Park Service General Management Plan.



## Shuttle Bus Passenger Totals 2003 to 2007

1998	2128
1999	2254
2000	2822
2001	2713
2002	2491
2003	2452

2004	0
2005	0
2006	0
2007	0
2018	0

**No longer accessible by NPS Shuttle Bus**

Between 1999 & 2003 an Each year between 1999 & 2003 an average of 2,500 visitors accessed trails and campgrounds along the Upper Stehekin Valley Road via shuttle bus ... If the road is not reopened until 2018, nearly 50,000 visitors will have been denied the opportunity to board an NPS shuttle and travel into the heart of the Cascades.



**Since the road closure in 2003, there has been a reduction of approximately 6,000 roundtrip boat passengers.**

*“To think that the quilt like fall color beauty of the Cascader Pass area will now be visualized only by healthy hikers and not accessible to the elderly and disabled is sad.” ~WF Stifter~*

# Public Access - The Upper Valley Road & The Law

*Laws creating this vast park complex specifically address the maintenance of Stehekin's upper valley road to provide for public access.*

Senators Dan Evans and Brock Adams introduced the Washington State Wilderness Act of 1988. They were clear concerning the intention of this act. Even though they were recommending a vast wilderness complex be created in Washington State, Senators Evans and Adams spoke to the importance of maintaining public access into the heart of these wilderness areas. How do we know Senators Evans and Adams valued continued access into the wilderness? Introducing the bill, Senator Evans testified before Congress stating:

*"What the bill would not do is to keep the park visitor shut out of the park. All the existing transportation and development corridors would be excluded from wilderness designation. ... I believe the parks are there to provide recreation, as well as, the preservation of the natural ecosystem."*

Congress listened to Senators Evans and Adams and included provisions for maintaining the Stehekin Valley Road in the Act. The Washington State Wilderness Act was (and still is) unambiguous concerning the importance of public access along the 21 mile Stehekin Valley Road.

The legislative history of the Wilderness Act speaks specifically to maintaining an essential recreational corridor in the Stephen Mather Wilderness. Visitor access by vehicular transport was codified in the WSWA of 1988. Americans were promised that a primitive road corridor would be maintained to provide visitor access from the Stehekin into the heart of the Cascades.

Given the responsibility to maintain access into the Stephen Mather Wilderness the first management decision by the NPS was to recommend cutting the potential of a 100' from centerline corridor to a 50' corridor, thereby narrowing their ability to maintain the road by 50%. Was this a responsible action considering the mandated need for public access? (See box below.)

Unfortunately, since the passage of the 1988 Washington State Wilderness Act, the National Park Service (NPS) has not always managed the upper Stehekin Valley Road in a manner that is congruent with the intention of the WSWA and its legislative history. This fact was especially evident when the NPS officially chose to close the road with a finding of "No Significant Impact" 2006.

## NPS Environmental Assessment

*"This action will officially close the valley road to all motorized and mechanized use at the current physical termination just downstream of Car Wash Falls, approximately 12.9 miles from the Stehekin Landing on the Lake Chelan and remove it from the National Park Service Road and trail system."...Summary: "National Park Service Environmental Assessment Finding of No Significant Impact"*

**\*Stehekin Heritage believes there was a predisposition by the agency (NPS) when performing its EA that biased the finding in favor of closing the road. Furthermore, we believe the agency bias against maintaining the road and access can be seen throughout the twenty year history of NPS management along the upper Stehekin Valley Road.**

**\*We believe the NPS Environmental Assessment process did not effectively assess public access and safety issues before reaching its 2006, "Finding of No Significant Impact," and closing the Upper Stehekin Valley Road.**

**\*We believe that the NPS should perform an EIS to determine if the Upper Stehekin Valley Road should be and/or could be reopened.**

*In response to the flood of 2003, the NPS conducted an Environmental Assessment (EA) to decide whether or not to repair or close the Upper Stehekin Valley Road. There are multiple levels of questionable management revealed when the NPS chose to use an EA rather than an EIS (Environmental Impact Statement). We believe the question of the Upper Valley Road should have received the benefit of an EIS rather than an EA.*

- This was a decision of extreme import to park visitors from across the nation and the EIS would have required a more detailed, scientific evaluation of the ability to repair the road. An EIS would have also broadened the search for public input concerning the importance of public access into the North Cascades.

- The significance of maintaining the Upper Valley Road was recognized as having significant value in the 1995 General Management Plan (GMP).

- In responses to the 2006 EA, the majority of letters submitted supported maintaining the Upper Stehekin Valley Road.

- The impact of the road closure on visitor access was not clearly articulated in the "Finding of No Significant Impact."

- The impact of the road closure on public safety as it pertains to the ability to fight fires in the upper valley was not addressed in the "Finding of No Significant Impact."

*Finally, the NPS sought no input concerning the development of a multi use trail (much less expensive with little environmental impact) to replace the washed out road.*



## 1995 General Management Plan Supports Road Corridor

"Unconstrained private vehicle use would end at High Bridge. Private vehicle use would be allowed, but traffic flow would be regulated by season of the year and/or hour of the day. Public shuttle bus service would be provided from the landing to Cottonwood. Only the public shuttle service, hikers, horses, and bicycles would be allowed to use the road from Bridge creek to Cottonwood. The National Park Service would seek a concessionaire to replace the National Park Service operated public shuttle service. Frequency of shuttle service would increase of the current rate. Fare structures would provide discounts for frequent and local public shuttle users.

### The management plan further states:

A wide spectrum of visitors would have diverse means of access to prime natural, cultural, scenic and recreational resources without significantly affecting park resources or degrading the experience of other visitors."



# Washington State Senator Linda Evans Parlette writes to United States Senator Maria Cantwell...

As you know, in late 2003 a flood of record struck the Stehekin River. This resulted in extensive damage to private property within the community of Stehekin, severe damage to roads and other National Park Service infrastructure within Lake Chelan National Recreation Area, and unprecedented damage to the Upper Stehekin Valley Road within the North Cascades National Park.

The community, with assistance from Chelan County, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the National Park Service has repaired virtually all damage to infrastructure within Lake Chelan National Recreation Area and the Lower Stehekin Valley road from future flood damage. The Upper Stehekin Valley Road, however remains impassable above Car Wash Falls.

The Upper Stehekin Valley Road runs approximately 12.8 Miles from the National Park - National Recreation area boundary at High Bridge to Cottonwood Camp. Car Wash Falls is located just 1.7 miles above High Bridge. The Washington Parks Wilderness Act of 1988 (PL 100-668), which establishes the Stephen Mather Wilderness Area, provides for a 100' wide non-wilderness corridor to accommodate this road segment. This was done in recognition of the traditional and vital role that this road plays in providing access to exceptional day hikes and fishing opportunities in the upper Stehekin Valley. The General Management Plan for Lake Chelan National Recreation Area, produced by the National Park Service in 1995, reconfirmed the importance of maintaining road access to Cottonwood Camp.

In April 2006 the National Park Service released a draft Environmental Assessment for the Upper Stehekin Valley Road. That document analyzed four alternatives: A) No action; B) Abandon the road above Car Wash Falls, develop a trailhead just below Car Wash Falls, and provide for trail access only from that point; C) Rebuild the road within the existing non-wilderness corridor (an alternative that has subsequently been shown to be virtually impossible due to the continuing instability of a landslide caused by the flood); and D) If Congress amends the Washington Parks Wilderness Act of 1988, relocate the destroyed portion of the present road to the "Old Wagon Road" (which was the original Upper Stehekin Valley Road), reroute the road around the section of road that washed out in 1995 and, using the existing undamaged road for the remainder, reestablish vehicular access to Cottonwood Camp.

Over 260 people provided written comment to the National Park Service regarding this draft. Nearly 90% strongly endorsed vehicular access to Cottonwood Camp. Many of those comments pointed out how damaging the loss of the Upper Stehekin Valley Road would be to the economy and lifestyles of Valley residents and generations of property owners. Others addressed the many popular day hikes that would no longer be possible and how this would concentrate use in what would become an over-crowded lower Stehekin Valley. Loss of access by the very young, the mobility impaired, and the very old were mentioned by several commenters. Nevertheless, the National Park Services issued its Finding of No Significant Impact announcing its plan to formally abandon the road above Car Wash Falls and to limit future access to hikers and stock parties only.

*Over 260 people provided written comment to the National Park Service regarding this draft. Nearly 90% strongly endorsed vehicular access to Cottonwood Camp.*

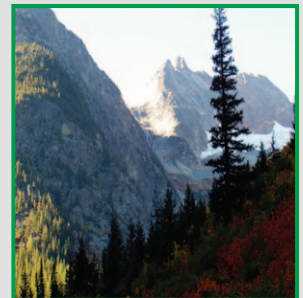
I find this decision to be particularly ironic in light of the recent released Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for Olympic National Park. With respect to conditions very similar to the Upper Stehekin Valley Road (specifically the Hoh, Queets, and Quinault Roads) the National Park Service preferred alternative recommends that, "if road relocation away from river meander areas is feasible, wilderness boundary modification would be sought as necessary, with not net loss of total Olympic National Park wilderness acreage."

It is my hope, Senator Cantwell, that you will sponsor legislation to amend the Washington Parks Wilderness Act of 1988. The amendment should require the National Park Service to maintain the Upper Stehekin Valley Road within the Stephen Mather Wilderness Area from High Bridge to Cottonwood Camp within a 100' wide non-wilderness corridor and, when necessary, to relocate the road and its non-wilderness corridor so long as there is no net loss of total wilderness acreage. The amendment should also authorize the appropriation of up to \$1.5 million to relocate this road segment and perform post-flood plain repairs. In its "Upper Stehekin Valley Road Car Wash Falls (MP 12.9) to Cottonwood Camp (MP22.8) Environmental Assessment" dated March 29, 2006 the National Park Service estimates the cost of this work at \$1,339,075.

This is a matter of great concern to many of the constituents in the district as well as throughout the state. Please let me know if you can be of assistance in resolving this issue appropriately.

Sincerely,  
Linda Evans Parlette  
Washington State Senator  
12th Legislative District

Cc U.S. Senator Patty Murray  
Congressman Doc Hastings  
Bill Paleck, Superintendent, North Cascades National Park Complex  
Chelan County Commissioners





WASHED OUT SECTION OF ROAD  
AT CAR WASH FALLS  
SUMMER 2007

*"..THE ROAD TREADS SOFTLY... IT STARTS AT A HANDSOME LAKESHORE AND DEAD-ENDS IN PARADISE... YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO DISCOVER IT... AND YOUR CHILDREN AND THEIRS TOO JUST AS WE DID. THEY CAN DISCOVER BUT ONLY IF WE KEEP SOME WILDERNESS IN BETWEEN THE SHINING SEAS..."*

*~ DAVID R. BROWER ~ FROM THE SIERRA CLUB'S MOVIE "THE WILDERNESS ALPS OF STEHEKIN"*



# Please Help Us Reopen The Upper Stehekin Valley Road. How can you help? *See back page...*



*"No alternative to the Stehekin valley issue should be considered that does not provide access to all by road to the historic end of the road at Cottonwood. Any other alternative is a form of discrimination and denial of historic access."*

*~Craig Wilbur~*

*"For me, it is a magical place to visit each year for a physical and spiritual renewal."*

*~Willa Fisher~*

*"It means too much to Stehekin's cultural heritage, economic viability, and recreational opportunities to refuse to repair the road."*

*~Jonathan Scherer~*

*Since the floods of recent years I have continued to attempt to hike and fish this area. Each year the area is less accessible to people. ... In the past two years I have walked between Car Wash Falls and the old Shady Campground and fished this area. In over twenty trips I have observed a total of less than twenty other people. Thirteen were seen in one trip over a major holiday weekend.*

*I have never seen a young person under about age eighteen, an elderly person over sixty or a handicapped person. I'm sure it was not the intent to have a National Park which was inaccessible to people, was it?*

*~Bob Lehman~*

*"An EA that assesses only extreme and opposite alternatives cannot provide a sound basis for good policymaking decisions."*

*~John Purbaugh~*

*"For the benefit of others like myself, the elderly, disabled and children there must be another option that will allow access and still be financially and environmentally acceptable to all parties."*

*~Janice Fannin~*

*"I think with the millions of acres of park land, this small miniscule road will have next to zero impact on wildlife and the physical nature of the valley."*

*~Mark Stewart~*

*"Wouldn't a road built away from the river also be less of an impact on the environment than one built along the ever changing river?"*

*~Cinda Gilbert~*

*"It is my belief that NPS has an ethical and moral obligation to maintain "Upper Stehekin Road" in a condition as stated in the 1988 document, which states: The 23-mile Stehekin Valley road will be maintained at its current length, width, and character."*

*~Ken Munk~*

*"Unfortunately, the NCNP was shown to be the 5th LEAST used Park in the system mainly due to access issues for the public."*

*~James T & Deborah A Gianulis~*

“THIS ROAD PROVIDES CRITICAL ACCESS FOR FIRE SUPPRESSION AND IS, THEREFORE, CRITICAL TO THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF RESIDENTS OF OUR SMALL COMMUNITY. THAT STATEMENT MAY, IN FACT, PROVE TO BE A GROSS UNDERSTATEMENT.”

~STEHEKIN FIRE DISTRICT #10 COMMISSIONERS~

## ACCESS CRITICAL TO PUBLIC SAFETY

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. That statement may, in fact, prove to be a gross understatement.

As you may know, the Stehekin Valley Road is not one road among many in the valley. It is the only road that accesses vast forests northwest of our small community. This is the direction of the prevailing winds; it is the direction from which we face the greatest threat of catastrophic wildfire. Much of the forest is unhealthy including large stands of beetle-infested or diseased trees that speed the spread of fire. Should a fire get started in these stands at the height of summer, winds would likely cause rapid spread into the lower valley putting lives at risk.

The best hope for avoiding such a disaster is rapid response. Throughout Stehekin's hundred-year history, the Stehekin Valley road has provided access for firefighters. As recently as 2003, firefighters used this road to contain the 80-acre Shady fire. If the road had been closed, as it is now, firefighters would have lost critical hours by either hiking into the burning area – a slow and dangerous approach – or waiting for limited air-supported resources (helicopter rappellers, smokejumpers) to access the blaze. Areas clear enough for a helicopter to land are also limited in the dense forests, creating additional access difficulties.

Our first concern as commissioners is the health and safety of local residents, but there are also financial considerations. The cost of fighting just one catastrophic wildfire can easily exceed the cost of road reconstruction. In the past six years alone, we have seen the 2001 Rex Creek Fire (\$4.3 million), the 2004 Deep Harbor Complex (\$18.6 million), and the 2006 Flick Creek Fire (\$4.1 million) along Lake Chelan. Once again, the key to avoiding such costs is rapid response which depends upon access.

We are asking that you take whatever steps necessary to assure that this road is reestablished. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Ana Maria Spagna  
David Kurth  
Bob Nielsen  
Stehekin Fire District #10 Commissioners

“BY EVENING THE FIRE WHICH WE HAD ENCOUNTERED IN THE MORNING HAD SWEEPED DOWN TO NEAR THE CABIN, AND ONLY WITH THE GREATEST EXERTIONS, AND BY OURSELVES BURNING A SPACE AROUND IT, WAS IT SAVED. WE WERE ALL COMPELLED TO SPREAD OUR BLANKETS THAT NIGHT ON A SAND ISLAND AT THE MOUTH OF THE RIVER IN ORDER TO BE SECURE FROM THE BURNING TREES. ...THE FIRE RAN UP BOTH SIDES OF THE CANYON TO THE VERY SUMMITS OF THE MOUNTAINS WITH THE SPEED OF A HURRICANE, ACCOMPANIED BY TERRIFIC CRACKLING AND ROARING. IT WAS A GRAND, BUT FEARFUL SPECTACLE, AS WE LAY ON THE SAND BAR ON THE NIGHT OF AUGUST 2ND, WATCHING THE IMMENSE SHEETS OF LURID FLAME LICKING UP EVERYTHING IN THEIR PATH AS THEY FOLLOWED ALONG THE SHORE OF THE LAKE, FROM THE WATER'S EDGE TO THE VERY SUMMIT, MAKING A VERITABLE MOUNTAIN OF FIRE. AT FREQUENT INTERVALS HUGE ROCKS LOOSENEED BY THE GREAT HEAT WENT TUMBLING DOWN THE PRECIPITOUS MOUNTAIN SIDES WITH A CRASHING NOISE AND PLUNGED INTO THE LAKE BELOW, THROWING UP GREAT COLUMNS OF WATER, RED TINTED IN THE GLARE OF THE BURNING FOREST.”

1889 ~ ALFRED DOWNING ~ A VISITOR TO JOHN HORTON'S CABIN



FLICK CREEK FIRE 2006



FIRE 2007



DOMKE FIRE 2007



FIRE FIGHTERS AT STEHEKIN LANDING  
2007



# WILDERNESS FANS LOBBY FOR ... A ROAD

BY RON JUDD

SEATTLE TIMES STAFF COLUMNIST

In the Northwest, the battle for the future of wilderness is increasingly being fought where the rubber meets the road. The roads in question are mostly gravel and lead into some magnificent pieces of wilderness. Case in point: the Stehekin River Road in the North Cascades. A lot of you will remember the ride: A shuttle bus used to make semi-regular runs from Stehekin, the picturesque community at the head of Lake Chelan, 23 miles up the river to Cottonwood Camp. From there, the splendor of wilderness literally surrounded you. Unforgettable alpine haunts such as the waterfall-festooned Horseshoe Basin were a short day-hike away — a five- or six-mile roundtrip. That hike became medium-length in 1995, when the upper three miles of the road washed out. And it got flat-out long in October 2003, when floods closed the road in the High Bridge area, leaving the upper 10 miles accessible only by foot.

As it mulled the future, the National Park Service heard from Stehekin visitors and residents who wanted the road reopened. They also listened to environmentalists arguing that the road should be left closed, to help restore true “wilderness.” The park, noting that wilderness rules tied its hands on relocating washed-out stretches, announced last year that the upper road would revert to nature.

It hasn't set well with a lot of Stehekin fans, who have launched a new lobbying effort for Congress to nudge the wilderness boundary enough to allow the road to be rebuilt. Environmentalists, predictably, argue that such roads are inherently anti-wilderness, and that it's silly for cash-starved federal agencies to spend millions sending out the road graders after each major flood. It's a reasonable position. And it's one repeated in battles over dozens of other Northwest backcountry roads in sensitive areas, such as the Carbon River Road in Mount

Rainier National Park and the White Chuck River Road, a primary access to the Glacier Peak Wilderness.

The problem, from this longtime trail-wanderer's perspective: People who show up at public hearings about such things tend to be a bit too in love with their own arguments. Stereotypes are flung about: Enviro call road advocates fading, selfish, gimpy-kneed hikers who want Horseshoe Basin to be a five-mile roundtrip walk, like it used to be, rather than the prohibitive 32-mile backpack it is today. Road advocates call environmentalists elitists who believe the only true wilderness is the one they can enjoy by themselves.

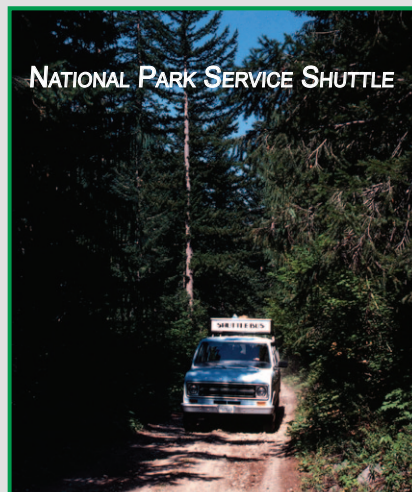
There's some truth in all that, and also a lot of bunk. Life is a lot more gray. So, too, wilderness management. A more reasoned approach would be to consider wilderness access questions not with religious zeal but case-by-case reasoning. Some logical criteria: Is a washed-out road the only access into an area, and will leaving it closed lock out the vast majority of potential wilderness visitors? Is there another road access to similar wilderness in the same area? Will reopening

a road subject the lands to crowds incompatible with “wilderness?” Is the road project itself an environmental hazard outweighing the convenience of easy public access?

I apply those questions to the upper Stehekin Valley Road and come to an easy conclusion: Rebuild it. This isn't a road that will bring a billion SUVs into the wilderness. It's one that starts in a tiny village inaccessible by car, and then sends only an occasional shuttle bus into wild lands. I'd never argue for building a road to Cottonwood Camp — or any place like it — from scratch today. But since the bulk of the road is already there, fixing it to restore previously established public access just makes sense.

Some people will call that an environmental cop-out. I call it a real-world compromise. Fortunately, those who want a more solitary, untrammelled wilderness experience are in luck. They can simply avoid Stehekin Valley and set foot toward the other million-plus acres of pristine North Cascades wilderness (combining the National Park and adjacent Pasayten Wilderness), the vast majority of it nowhere near anything that even looks like a road. That's the blessing we enjoy in the Northwest, where — thanks largely to visionary environmental groups, some now arguing for road closures — the last, greatest unspoiled places in the lower 48 states are expansive enough to provide for both uses.

A road here and there, and millions of acres of true wilderness all around it. That's a pretty healthy balance. Maybe we should embrace it — and expend our energy protecting it from real threats. A shuttle bus and a strip mine are vastly different creatures. And with a vigilant public in charge, the continued existence of one need not necessarily herald the arrival of the other.



RON JUDD'S TRAIL MIX COLUMN

APPEARS EVERY THURSDAY. TO CONTACT HIM:  
206-464-8280 OR RJUDD@SEATTLETIMES.COM. COPY-  
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*A more reasoned approach would be to consider wilderness access questions not with religious zeal but case-by-case reasoning...*

# LETTER FROM TERRY LAVENDER

IN RESPONSE TO

AN EDITORIAL IN THE WILD CASCADES SENT TO:

EDITOR, THE WILD CASCADES, SUMMER/FALL 2007

NORTH CASCADES CONSERVATION COUNCIL

P.O. Box 95980

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98145-2980

As a long time member of the “environmental community” I am appalled to see the use of inflammatory language and untruths in “Hastings Launches Effort to Gut the Wilderness System”. It is discouraging to see tactics, long complained about by environmentalists, used in THE WILD CASCADES magazine.

In Denali National Park, there is administrative authority to move access roads for trails and services when damaged in storm or flood events without an Act of Congress. The non wilderness corridors are fixed in size but flexible in location as the environment changes. This provision has existed since the Park Wilderness overlay was established. Because the Washington Wilderness Act creating the Stephen Mather Wilderness Area designated a 100 foot wide road corridor tied to geographic points with no such flexibility, it truly takes an Act of Congress to move an access road that has been damaged by flooding.

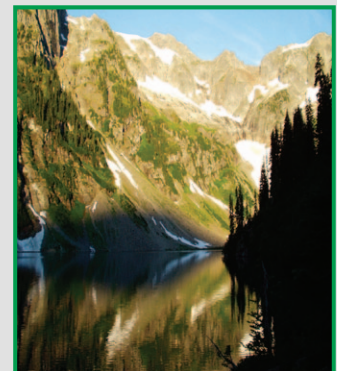
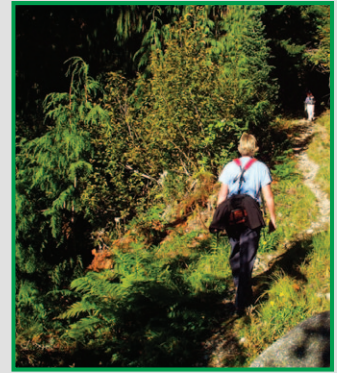
The Hastings proposal simply asks that the 100 foot non Wilderness Road corridor be traded to an area well away from the river and the riparian area next to the river become wilderness. This is the same administrative flexibility that exists in Denali. The Hastings proposal is carefully specific only to the Stehekin Road. There is no change in the amount of wilderness, no change in the Park management plan allowing road access to trailheads, no change in the requirements of the Environmental Species Act, no huge amount of acreage involved (less than three miles of one lane dirt road is about seven acres) and no conspiracy to remove the overall wilderness designation. How can this be gutting the Wilderness System? Are we really so afraid of common sense and flexibility, so stuck in the fear of giving an inch that this kind of language is necessary and acceptable. If so, I think we are at great risk of being marginalized as extremists.

The article contains several less than factual points. It states that the Park Service decided to close the damaged road after extensive public process – True. The majority of testimony, both written and oral was in favor of keeping the road open, however. The majority of editorial press across the State has also favored keeping the road open. The proposal to trade the riparian area to wilderness and move the road is precisely so the road will be easier and less expensive to maintain. Yes, it is less expensive to maintain nothing but disingenuous not to compare maintaining the road in the existing location vs. a less flood prone location. A less vulnerable location would leave intact the Park management plan that includes this limited access corridor to accommodate visitors.

I am saddened that common sense or at least fact based disagreement is not part of what the environmental community holds sacred. It will be very difficult to put together coalitions for additional Wilderness Areas like the Wild Sky, Wild Pratt River or Alpine Lakes addition if members who are not strong, long distance backpackers or willing to cede areas from all human use feel their access is threatened. As environmental advocates, I think we do harm by attempting to exclude reasonable human use and enjoyment by a broad range of citizens from my 77 year old mother to casual day hikers like myself who just might fall in love with the North Cascades and become strong advocates for protection.

It was the NCCC and others who successfully secured this area as National Park by showing the wonders and beauty of the Horseshoe Basin which was a day hike from the end of the Stehekin Road at the Park's inception. It is now completely out of reach by all but a strong few. I think we will pay dearly for the loss of this inspirational opportunity.

***How can you help reopen the road?... See back page***







# DON'T CALL IT A 'NATIONAL' PARK

TRACY WARNER, EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR, THE WORLD  
WENATCHEE, WA

POSTED AUGUST 14, 2007

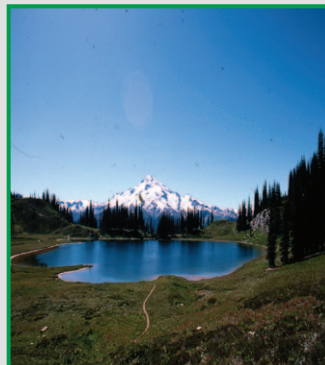
It used to be the term “national” in national park implied mutual ownership. It was everybody’s. The people, whoever they might be, could visit and appreciate the nation’s natural heritage, the places we valued so highly that we set them aside to be preserved in perpetuity. Exclusivity wasn’t part of the concept. National parks weren’t backpacking preserves only for the enjoyment of the tiny minority who are fit, healthy, wealthy and endowed with much free time. Although the nature of backcountry and wilderness made much of the parks accessible only on foot, there were always a few places set up for ordinary people to come, look and share the experience, to have a chance to appreciate the park that in a real sense belongs to them.



For the Stehekin Valley that kind of populist it’s-everybody’s-park attitude has been fading for years, kept alive mainly by the stubborn locals who based their economic existence on it. They are losing the struggle. The National Park Service seems indifferent and the environmentalists who greatly affect official opinion are openly hostile. Some promote exclusivity in the name of preserving the wilderness which, if their attitude prevails, will be accessible only to people like them. That’s the idea: Humans begone, except us.



So in the absence of the political will to prevent it, access to some of the most beautiful places in North America will be lost permanently, and a community that relies on less-than-exclusive public access to those areas will wither and fade. The effects are already felt, as Sunday’s story on the closure of the Stehekin Valley Road by The World’s K.C. Me-haffey showed vividly.



The road once ran from Stehekin landing 23 miles upriver to Cottonwood Camp, well within the North Cascades National Park. That Stehekin itself is accessible only by boat, plane or foot meant the road was lightly used compared with national park thoroughfares elsewhere. But, it made the North Cascades accessible, putting such great beauty only a short walk away. But in 2003 a massive flood and washout cut the road in half. Last August the National Park Service announced it was abandoning the upper 10 miles of road. The must-see places the road once reached now are accessed only after a strenuous backpack.

The proposed remedy is simple. Rebuild the road on the old mining trail, above the river. It’s cheap, relatively, and could avoid future washouts. But, building there requires changing the boundaries of the Stephen Mather Wilderness, which the road bisects. That requires an act of Congress, which is extremely difficult to get, next to impossible some say. Propose any change in wilderness boundaries and people will fight it, even one this small, even if this proposal would not lose a square inch of wilderness, only exchange one road for another.

Wilderness boundaries are not a divine writ. They are human creations. Humans can change them. Doing it to rebuild a road, to return to the public what the public has lost -- access to its national park -- is an entirely just reason. The wilderness system will not fall if this is done. Vacation home builders and mining engineers are not waiting for this opportunity to pounce.

If the road is never rebuilt, the Stehekin Valley will become something different: an exclusive zone, only for some, and most likely not for you. It won’t really be a “national” park, not anymore.

“I SUPPOSE OPENING THE STEHEK-  
IN ROAD SHOULD HAPPEN FOR THE FOL-  
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UPPER STEHEKIN VALLEY, FAMILIES  
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EXPERIENCE AND RESEARCH ON THE  
FLORA AND FAUNA AND MYCOTA OF  
THE EAST SLOPE OF THE NORTH CAS-  
CADES CAN BE DONE IN STEHEKIN BET-  
TER THEN ANYWHERE.”

~ JIM TRAPPE ~

The review has included:

1) a historical recognition of the Upper Valley Road and its importance to valley visitors and the Stehekin Community, 2) a presentation of data that suggests dwindling visitation in the North Cascades National Park and the lower Stehekin Valley, 3) an introduction of the essential elements of legislative history that codified the value of maintaining visitor access into the heart of the Cascades, 4) quotes from public testimony representing the majority of respondents who supported reopening the road, 5) a presentation of public safety issues not addressed by the Environmental Assessment conducted by the NPS, 6) a sampling of news articles and editorials favoring reopening the Upper Valley Road and 7) recommendations for ACTION you can take to promote visitor access and public safety in the North Cascades of Washington State.

*We hope you will actively  
support reopening of the  
Upper Stehekin Valley Road...*



*“Our children no longer learn how to read the great Book of Nature from their own direct experience or how to act creatively with the seasonal transformations of the planet. They seldom learn where their water comes from or where it goes. We no longer coordinate our human celebration with the great liturgy of the heavens.”*

*~Wendell Berry~*

## THE LAW

The National Park Service (NPS) decision to permanently close the Upper Stehekin Valley Road countermands the intention of all legislative action regarding visitor access in the North Cascades National Park Complex.

## PUBLIC TESTIMONY

The NPS Environmental Assessment (EA) minimized or willfully ignored the preponderance of public testimony supporting the reopening the Upper Valley Road.

## DATA GATHERING AND ASSESSMENT

It is not apparent that the NPS gathered or analyzed data (in the form of visitor surveys or other quantifiable instruments) to assess impacts of the road closure on visitor access and public safety values.

The NPS “Finding of No Significant Impact” document declaring the permanent closure of the road is heavily laden with NPS opinion but disturbingly light on actual data supporting these opinions.

## CONCLUSION

When the NPS permanently closed the Upper Stehekin Valley Road, the agency ignored the intention of Congress as it pertains to visitor access, minimized the bulk of public testimony supporting the reopening of the road and offered little quantifiable data assessing the impact of the road closure on visitor access and public safety issues.

## ACTION

1) At a minimum, the NPS should be required to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) assessing the value of reopening Stehekin’s Upper Valley Road. The Environmental Assessment (EA) performed by the agency was far too blunt an instrument to properly assess the impact of visitor access and public safety issues.

2) Stehekin Heritage encourages you to write: National Park Service Regional Jon Jarvis (address found on page next page) sending copies of your letter to elected officials.

This letter would communicate your desire that the NPS conduct an EIS concerning the reopening of the Upper Stehekin Valley Road and that the EIS consider alternatives that support low impact vehicular access along the Congressionally mandated access corridor.

3) Additionally, if the NPS believes it impossible or undesirable to conduct an EIS, it will be necessary to request that elected officials support Congressman Doc Hastings’ Bill H.R. 3408 that would reopen the Upper Stehekin Valley Road with no net loss of Wilderness.

**The Wilderness opportunity available to  
Sierra Club’s David Brower and his sons  
in 1958 should be available to Stehekin  
Valley visitors in 2008.**



# THANKS TO EVERYONE FOR ALL YOUR SUPPORT.

*WE HAVE WELL OVER 1,000 LETTERS AND PETITIONS BUT, THIS ISSUE IS FAR FROM BEING RESOLVED.*

## WE CONTINUE TO NEED YOUR HELP, HERE'S HOW...

- ☒ Write letters, the addresses to our public officials can be accessed by visiting... [http://www.stehekinchoice.com/Stehekin\\_Heritage](http://www.stehekinchoice.com/Stehekin_Heritage)
- ☒ Read letters from other individuals who support our cause and sign up for email updates, visit ... [http://www.stehekinchoice.com/Stehekin\\_Heritage](http://www.stehekinchoice.com/Stehekin_Heritage)

Laura Joss  
Pacific West Region  
Regional Director NPS  
333 Bush Street, Suite 500  
San Francisco, CA 94104-2828  
(415) 623-2100

Governor Jay Inslee  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002  
Call 360-902-4111  
or 1-800-833-6388.  
Fax 360-753-4110

Congressman Dave Reichert  
Washington, DC Office  
1127 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515  
Phone: (202) 225-7761  
Fax: (202) 225-4282  
Wenatchee: (425) 677-7414



Secretary of the Interior  
Ryan Zinke  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington DC 20240  
202-208-3100  
[webteam@ios.doi.gov](mailto:webteam@ios.doi.gov)

Senator Cantwell  
311 Hart Senate Office Bldg  
Washington, DC 205100001  
ph: (202) 224-3441  
fax: (202) 228-0514

Senator Patty Murray  
154 //Russell Senate Office  
Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Phone (202) 224-2621  
Fax: (202) 224-0238  
Toll Free: (886) 481-9186

State Senator 12th District  
Brad Hawkins  
P.O. Box 40412  
Olympia, WA 98504-0412  
Phone: (360) 786-7622  
Toll-free: (800) 562-6000  
[brad.hawkins@leg.wa.gov](mailto:brad.hawkins@leg.wa.gov)

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☐ Help by donating money... Send check or money order to:  
*Stehekin Heritage, PO Box 1, Stehekin, WA 98852*

☐ \$25    ☐ \$50    ☐ \$100  
or more

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STREET \_\_\_\_\_

CITY & ZIPCODE \_\_\_\_\_

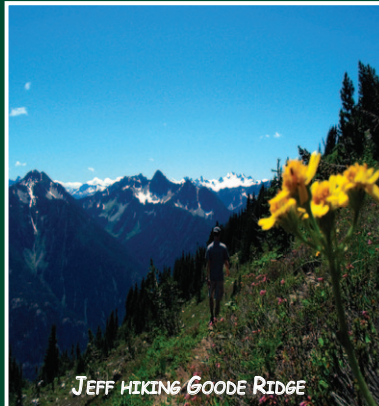
EMAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

# DRINKING THE MOUNTAIN

~JEFF BILBRO~

THIS MORNING I WATCHED THE SUN  
RISE OVER RAINBOW MOUNTAIN  
TURN THE RIVER INTO RUNNING FIRE  
SET THE MOUNTAINS AGLOW

I STOPPED, TRYING TO FREEZE TIME  
AND WISHED FOR MY CAMERA  
BUT NO CAMERA COULD CAPTURE  
THIS VAST BEAUTY WELLING IN MY THROAT



OR THE FLICKERING LIGHT  
WEAVING ACROSS THE RIVER  
AS I WATCHED, THE COLORS FADED  
LIKE WATER DRAINED OUT

THROUGH TIGHT CUPPED HANDS  
SO I BENT AND DRANK DEEP  
AND TURNED TO GO AS THE LAST GUZZLED  
DROPS DRIPPED FROM MY CHIN

As a future visitor to the Stehekin Valley, I feel that my recreational use and enjoyment of this area has been greatly curtailed due to the closure of the Upper Stehekin Valley Road. I support the reopening of this road through legislation or administrative action that will result in no net loss of wilderness in the Stephen Mather wilderness overlay.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Return To ... Stehekin Heritage, PO Box 1, Stehekin, WA 98852

For Stehekin Valley Road Updates, include your email address and give us permission to keep you informed.

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

"What the bill would not do is to keep the park visitor shut out of the park. All the existing transportation and development corridors would be excluded from wilderness designation. ... I believe the parks are there to provide recreation, as well as, the preservation of the natural ecosystem."

*Senator, Dan Evans, 1988*



"WE NEED TO HAVE COMMON SENSE IN OUR DECISION MAKING. A FEW MILES OF ROAD TO ALLOW SHUTTLE ACCESS TO MAGNIFICENT TRAILHEADS SHOULD BE SEEN AS A POSITIVE, IMPORTANT PART OF THE NORTH CASCADES NATIONAL PARK."

*WASHINGTON STATE GOVERNOR  
MIKE LOWRY, 2008*