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The Wild Sky Wilderness Proposal: Politics, Process, and Participation in Wilderness Designation

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THE WILD SKY WILDERNESS PROPOSAL:
POLITICS, PROCESS, AND PARTICIPATION
IN WILDERNESS DESIGNATION

A Thesis Presented

by

KASSIA C. RANDZIO

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
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I would like to thank the people of the Sky Valley and the Skykomish Ranger District employees who have allowed me to become familiar with Wild Sky, the Forest Service, and the region as a whole. This research is largely based on interviews with the many people interested in the outcome of the Wild Sky Wilderness debate, and I greatly appreciate their willingness to spend time talking with me about the proposal, public involvement, Sky Valley history, and visions for the Valley's future. Finally, thank you to Stan Stevens and Piper Gaubatz for the many hours they have spent reading and editing my work.

ABSTRACT

THE WILD SKY WILDERNESS PROPOSAL: POLITICS, PROCESS, AND PARTICIPATION IN WILDERNESS DESIGNATION

MAY 2008

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Wild Sky, a proposed wilderness in Washington State, has been a source of local contention since its inception. Drawing on the theories of political ecology, international conservation, and actor-based politics, this research seeks to understand the process of public participation in wilderness designation, the arguments both for and against Wild Sky, and how the wilderness proposal process could be improved. The paper begins with an outline of local and public participation in Wild Sky legislation, a discussion of “community,” and an account of how the 1964 Wilderness Act has been applied nationally and locally. This is followed by an analysis of interviews conducted with Forest Service employees and many of Wild Sky’s proponents and opponents. Advocates hope Wild Sky will boost the local economy, rehabilitate salmon runs, provide increased recreational access, and preserve an ecosystem typically excluded from wilderness – lowland forests and streams. Opponents see the proposal as an elite land grab that would exclude motorized recreation and prohibit the resource extraction

historically important in the area. They argue that the land, logged a century ago, does not qualify as wilderness. Ultimately, the Forest Service will be charged with managing the land, but the Wild Sky legislation creates management expectations that will be difficult to achieve due to recent budget cuts and environmental regulations.

My research demonstrates that the lead actors in the wilderness debate have changed, with the voice of the timber industry replaced by more diverse opposition from motorized recreation. Although the Washington Congressional delegation strove to accommodate these various interests through public meetings and negotiations, the process could have been improved. Currently, the 1964 Wilderness Act does not outline a format for public involvement regarding Congressional additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System. However, this legislation should offer specific opportunities for public and local participation. Most importantly, in collaboration with the Forest Service and local communities, wilderness advocates and the federal government must be prepared to offer long-term support for wilderness through budget allocations and volunteer hours in order to ensure that Wild Sky's long-term ecological and economic benefits are achieved.

KEY WORDS: Wilderness, Washington State, National Forests, Local Participation, Political Ecology, Conservation

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BLM.....	Bureau of Land Management
D.....	Democrat
IUCN.....	World Conservation Union
MBF.....	Million Board Feet
MBS.....	Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest
NEPA.....	National Environmental Policy Act
NWFP.....	Northwest Forest Plan
R.....	Republican
RARE II.....	Second Roadless Area Review and Evaluation
SAWS.....	Snowmobile Alliance of Western States
USFS.....	United States Forest Service
WA.....	Washington State
WSSA.....	Washington State Snowmobile Association
WWC.....	Washington Wilderness Coalition

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: SKY

Wild Sky Wilderness. Depending on who you ask, the name may bring to mind big trees, clear streams, alpine meadows, and craggy peaks. Or, equally possible, one may think of the Skykomish people, mining claims, farmland, the Great Northern Railroad, and the timber industry. Others might think of economic, political, and cultural dislocation. Wild Sky is all of this. A proposed wilderness in Washington State's north Cascades, Wild Sky has been fraught with political controversy since it was first passed in the Senate in 2003, but perhaps more importantly, it has been a source of local controversy since its inception.

Currently, the 106,000 acre Wild Sky Wilderness proposal would be adjacent to the Henry M. Jackson and Alpine Lakes wilderness areas on the west side of Washington's Cascades, making a combined total of 602,673 acres designated as wilderness in and around the Skykomish River valley (Figure 1). Unlike many wilderness areas that encompass high peaks and alpine ecosystems, Wild Sky looks to preserve lowland forest and sub-alpine meadows (Senate Hearing no. 108-68 2003, 5). These areas have historically been excluded from the National Wilderness Preservation System (Marsh 2007), making Wild Sky an important addition in terms of ecosystem representation. Only 90 minutes from Seattle and its outlying suburbs – a population of 2.5 million – the protected areas along U.S. Route 2 are popular with weekend vacationers who leave behind suburban life in favor of the forest. However, the area is also the backyard for several towns nestled between the banks of the Skykomish River

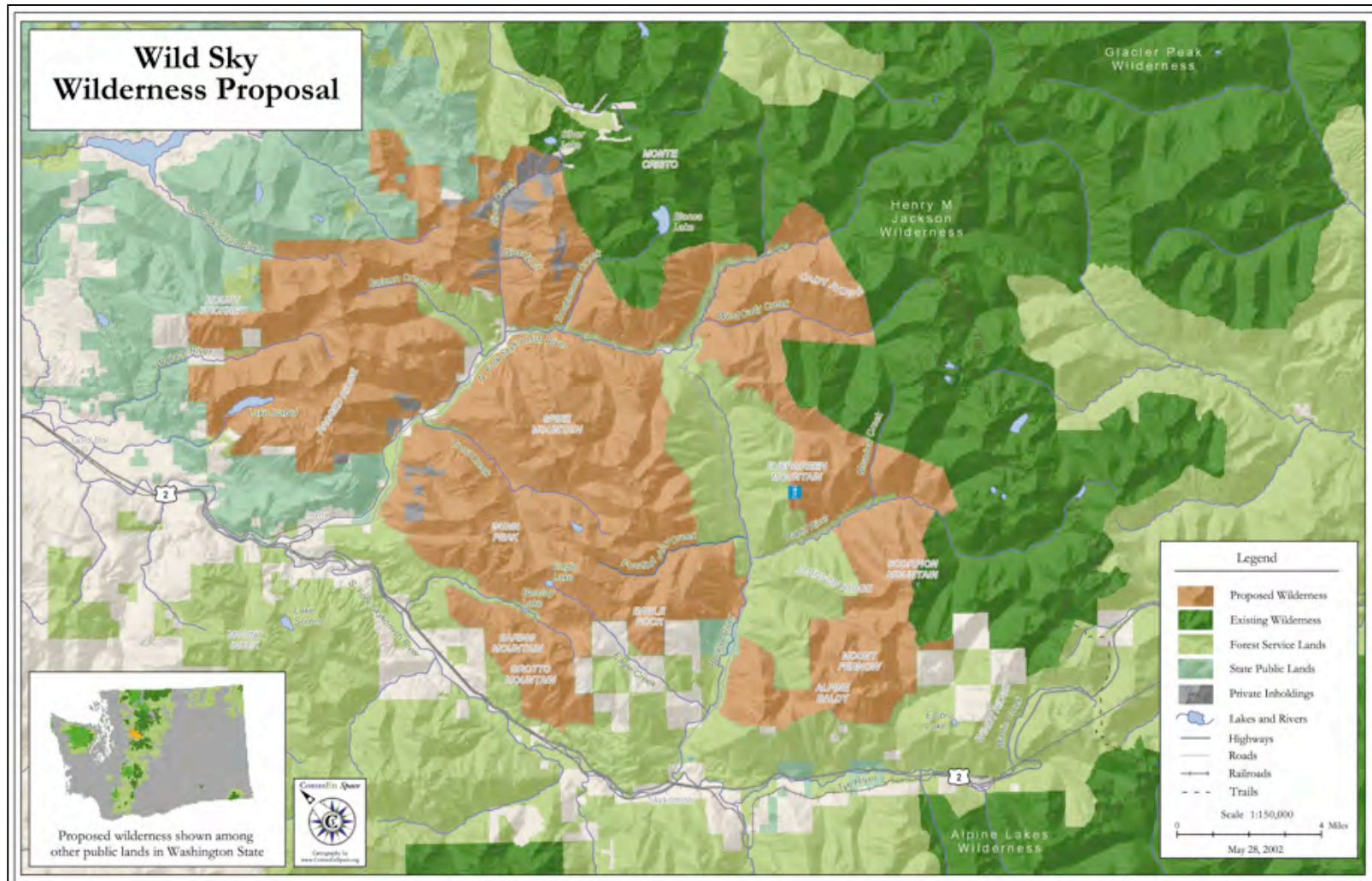


Figure 1. Wild Sky Wilderness Proposal with Inset, 2002. (College of Forest Resources, 2002)

and the boundaries of the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, where a history of economic dependence on resource extraction and a feeling of political marginalization influence perceptions of federal designations. While seeking to preserve ecosystem functions, rehabilitate salmon runs, and revitalize local economies, proponents have made Wild Sky attractive by marketing its recreational and economic opportunities as a clear human benefit. Opponents, some of whom feel excluded from the process of negotiating regulations and boundaries, see wilderness as an elitist land grab that denies people recreational opportunities and economic stability by excluding motorized vehicles and prohibiting resource extraction. I will examine these opposing viewpoints while evaluating why the proposal addresses some concerns and not others.

In an era of landscape scale and ecoregional conservation, individual and group agreement with conservation goals and management plans is imperative to successful conservation (Foreman 2004, Adams 2006). I began my research with the theory that if the Wild Sky Wilderness negotiations have successfully involved the “community” – those people who live in the towns closest to Wild Sky – and the community agrees with management decisions or participates in management, then more community members will enter national lands as stewards rather than merely visitors. If these goals are achieved, then perhaps Wild Sky can serve as an example for future wilderness proposals. However, if the voices within the community have been left out of the wilderness planning process, then lessons must be learned from Wild Sky.

As a land use decision rife with political, historical, economic, and cultural coding it is appropriate to examine the conflict over Wild Sky from the conceptual frameworks of political ecology. Using perspectives on the politics of conservation, protected areas,

and community management, I examine federal wilderness legislation and the local ramifications of wilderness designation. Combining an actor-based politics approach (Bryant 1997) with discourse analysis (Bryant 1997; Neumann 2005; Robbins 2004; Zimmerer and Bassett 2003), I have sought to understand the Wild Sky actors, their agendas and underlying interests, and how their political interactions have shaped the proposed wilderness.

In 1987, when political ecology was first being developed, Blaikie and Brookfield wrote, “The phrase ‘political ecology’ combines the concerns of ecology and a broadly defined political economy. Together this encompasses the constantly shifting dialectic between society and land-based resources, and also within classes and groups within society itself” (in Walker 2005, 74). This definition has since evolved, but as a root of political ecology, it is applicable to this research because the debate surrounding Wild Sky reveals an economy in transition, political dislocation, and a shift in social values and perceptions of ecological resources. Although much of the formative literature in political ecology has been developed through fieldwork in the third world, political ecology insights can be applied to the upper Skykomish River Valley, where the realities of historic economic dependency on national and global markets, and political marginalization within a system of federal representation based on the urban popular vote, parallel the political and economic power structures of the global South. The towns near Wild Sky have essentially operated as resource colonies for the last 100 years (Egan 1990, 253), during which time a unique culture has developed. However, unlike many local communities analyzed in protected areas literature, these towns lack a history of

community conservation techniques and cohesive traditions rooted in centuries of cultural development.

Beyond a discussion of whether the proposed land will become wilderness or not, the Wild Sky debate reflects broader political and economic marginalization as well as changing definitions of “resource” and “greatest good.” As Blaikie writes:

...environmental issues do not so much rest on unexamined and so-called “real” changes in nature, but are socially constructed and become issues through developments in scientific research and political and economic circumstances which shift and reform already established representations of nature (Blaikie 1999, 133).

Whereas the federal government once encouraged timber harvests in the highly productive Pacific Northwest, the question now is whether leaving the land alone creates a more valuable resource than harvesting its goods. Cast into the sphere of federal politics, but potentially affecting regional ecology and local economies, the issue of whether Wild Sky will become wilderness or not lies at the intersection of “ecology and a broadly defined political economy.”

In order to fully understand the current impacts of wilderness on the Skykomish community in light of its past and present economic, cultural, environmental, and recreational identities, I used background material consisting of regional and local histories, newspaper articles and editorials, and Congressional wilderness hearings and legislation. I explored environmental organizations’ campaigns for wilderness and local people’s perception of wilderness in part through analyzing the language of pamphlets, websites, and literature published by both wilderness proponents and opponents. Websites managed by snowmobile associations, all-terrain vehicle organizations, wilderness advocates, and recreation groups often contain editorials and action

campaigns, revealing differing perspectives on Wild Sky. In addition to this background material, I have integrated my experiences working in the Skykomish River valley as a seasonal employee for the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest during the summer of 2007.

Using an actor-based approach, this study seeks to understand diverse actors' views on Wild Sky, how they developed, and how power structures affect which of these views dominate the debate. Interviews with various actors in Seattle, Everett, and the Skykomish River valley towns have helped to fill in gaps left in the literature and to better understand local perceptions of Wild Sky. For two weeks in late January and early February 2008 I met with Forest Service employees, local historians, business people, environmental organizations, snowmobilers, off-road vehicle enthusiasts, and local, county, and federal politicians. Having already become acquainted with Skykomish during the summer months, a winter visit gave me the opportunity to gain a fuller understanding of the valley.

In order to achieve the flexibility needed to allow individuals to share their opinions and experiences while still maintaining focused sessions, I used semi-structured interview techniques as outlined in *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography* (Hay 2005). Working from a list of questions tailored to specific types of participants, I sought to determine individual awareness of the proposal, views, positions, interests, and the extent of community involvement in the process.

For several of the early interviews, I gave participants an 11x17 inch map and asked them where they would draw the wilderness boundaries (Figure 2). The map included U.S. Highway 2, Forest Service roads, current wilderness designations,

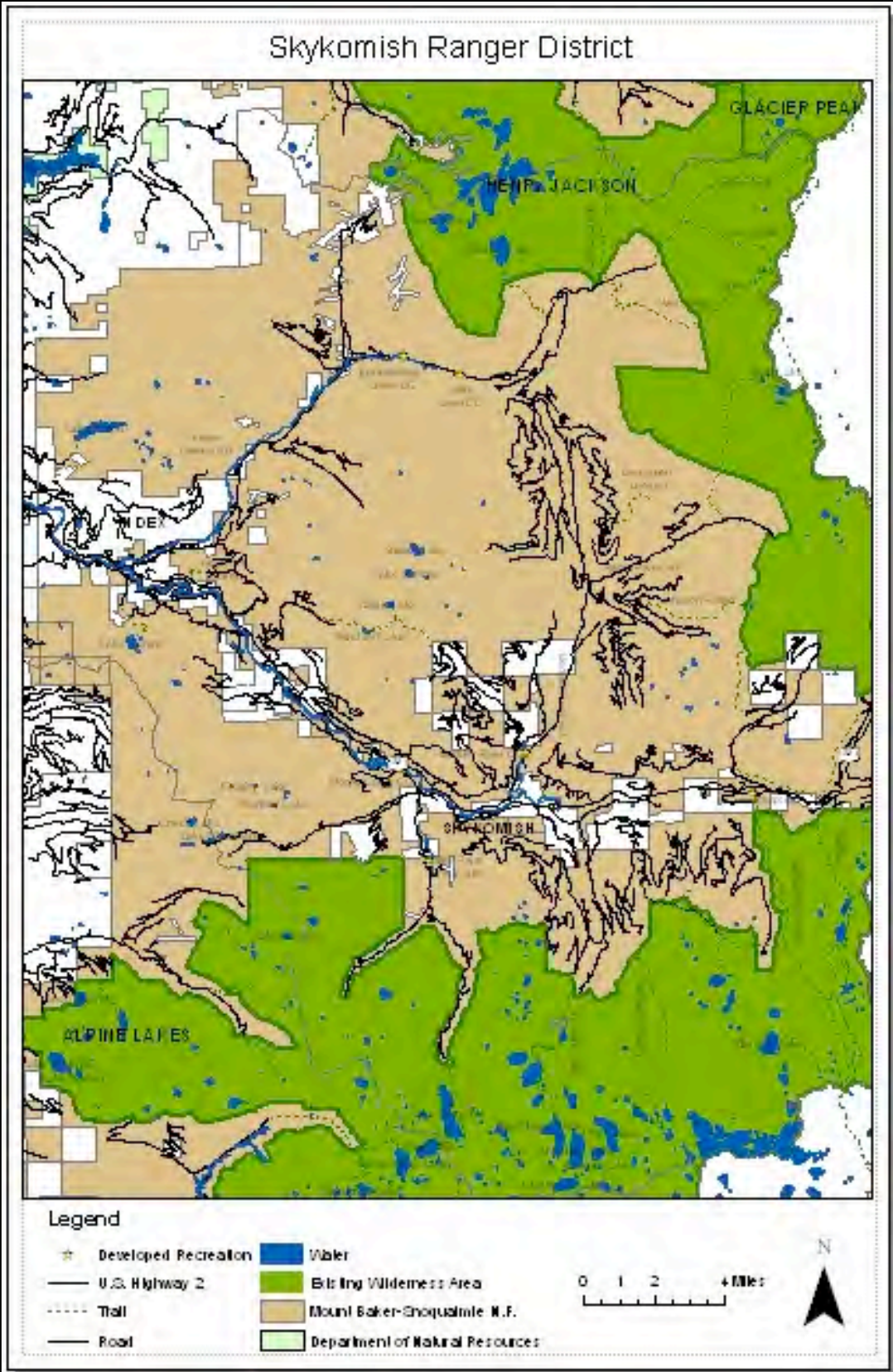


Figure 2. Wild Sky Interview Map, Originally 11x17in.

developed recreation sites, lakes and rivers, and nearby towns. It did not include the wilderness boundaries proposed by Congress, but rather offered participants a “blank map” to draw their own boundaries. This tool was useful for determining people’s level of familiarity with the area, since some participants could quickly identify mountain peaks and dammed lakes, or could point to areas where the boundaries have been shifted to account for superfund sites or motorized recreation. However, people were reluctant to draw on the map. I found that the individuals with the greatest familiarity had also been closely involved with the process of negotiation, and were reluctant to risk tipping the political balance by suggesting alternative boundaries. People who were passionate about Wild Sky, but who were not overly familiar with the area, were unable to draw boundaries on the blank map. Although this exercise provided a sense of participants’ familiarity with the land and the extent of their involvement in the process, this information could be gained equally well through interview questions and by using other reference maps. Considering these experiences, I did not use the mapping tool with all interviewees.

Each interview was conducted in a location chosen by the interviewee. While it was most convenient to meet politicians, Forest Service employees, and environmental organizers in their offices, other people preferred to meet in coffee shops or in their homes. Because of the possibility that people might not want to share sensitive information at their workplace, interviews in offices were always in side rooms, where there was very little interference from other employees. Most people, however, did not seem to view involvement with Wild Sky as a sensitive subject, and seemed able to freely voice their opinions, no matter what the setting.

Participants signed informed consent forms, indicating that they were aware of the aims of the study and selecting whether or not to remain anonymous. I also asked participants if I could record our conversation in order to facilitate the process of taking notes and selecting direct quotes. Most people did not object, but some preferred not to be recorded.

In addition to serving as a forum for me to ask questions, the interview process provided an opportunity for participants to ask questions of me. Although local involvement with the proposal was vigorous in its early years, with a series of community meetings, negotiations, editorials, and newspaper articles keeping the public informed about the proposal's progress, the flurry of information has waned. The Wild Sky Wilderness Act has been introduced in Congress several times, where it has then sat motionless for months. Meanwhile, the public has become less informed. I found that some people thought the area had already become wilderness while others wondered why the proposal continues to lag in Congress. Other people, especially individuals I met through casual encounters on the street or in diners, wanted to know what activities would be permitted once it became wilderness. Although some of these specifics are addressed in the legislation (such as float plane access) and other regulations are simply widely practiced administrative policies (such as a group size limit of twelve individuals), I was able to answer questions while simultaneously learning more about participants' awareness of the proposal and the political process. Together, interviews and printed material have provided a fuller understanding of the politics, community, process, and history associated with Wild Sky.

Congress will likely soon pass judgment on the Wild Sky Wilderness Act, determining if it will become Washington State's first wilderness addition since 1984. In the process, the multiple contested meanings of nature, wilderness, and the greatest good have been thrust into the political system and Congress is charged with interpreting these value-laden terms, making national decisions that have local economic, cultural, and political implications. This research seeks to understand how these values are determined, whose voices have been heard in the process, and how the pending federal decision will affect people locally.

The Skykomish River Valley

I first entered the Sky Valley by car, heading west over the Cascade Crest. Clinging to the mountainside on U.S. Highway 2, I descended into the narrow valley, where spring melt raced to Puget Sound. Winter lingered on the mountaintops, but green meadows brightened the slopes, foreshadowing summer's arrival.

From 4,061 foot Stevens Pass, there are extensive views of the Skykomish River valley and surrounding peaks, but dropping in elevation, the view becomes one of dense forests that hide the mountainous terrain beyond. Twisting and turning alongside the river, the highway follows the U-shaped, glacier-cut valley through the small towns of Skykomish, Baring, and Index.

Continuing west, the valley gradually widens, and so too does Route 2 as it passes through the ever larger towns of Gold Bar, Sultan, and Monroe (Figure 3). Surrounded by farms and former-farms, the land is rapidly being developed for gas stations, housing developments, and shopping plazas. Only 30 minutes from Everett and 40 minutes from

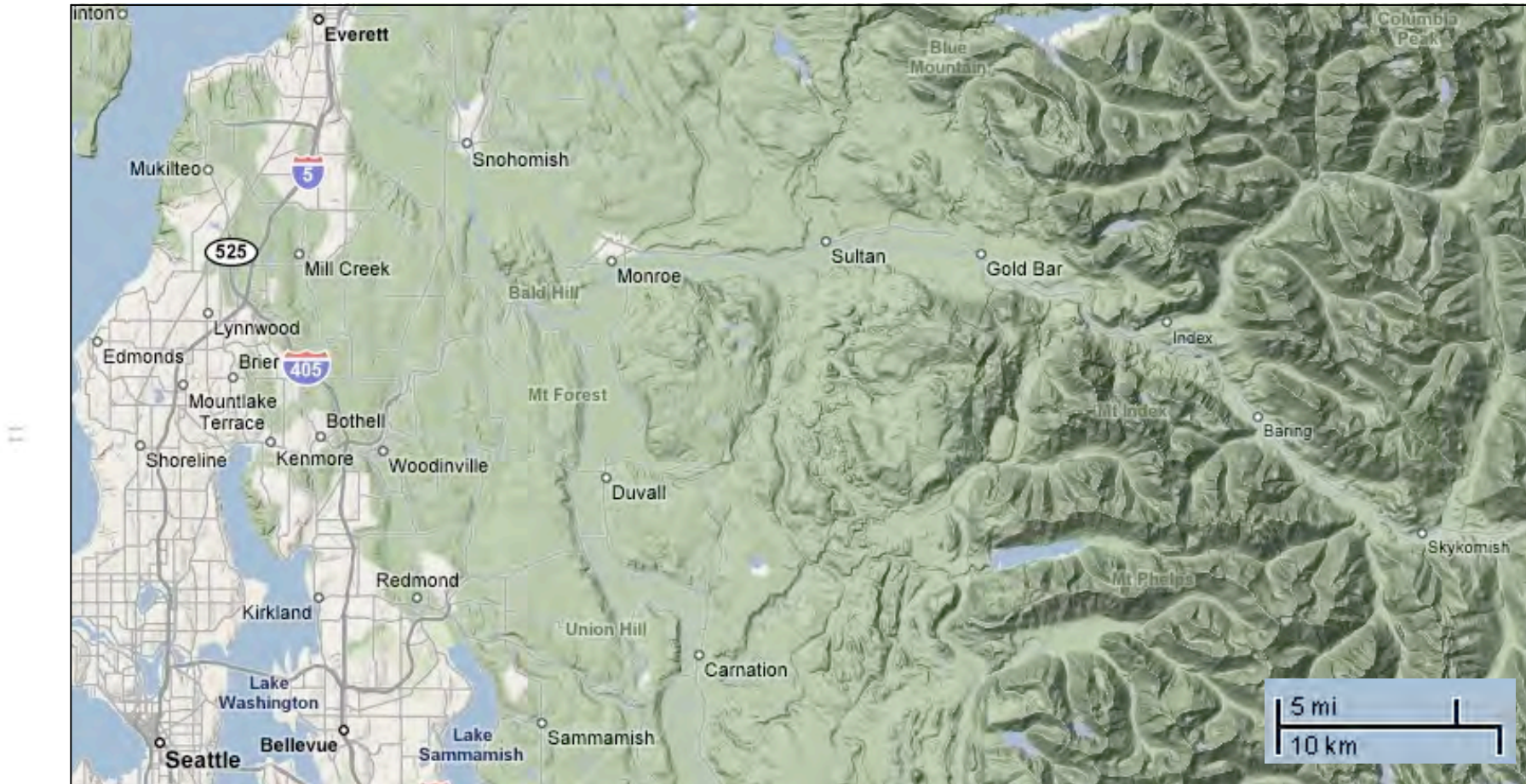


Figure 3. The Skykomish River Valley. U.S. Route 2 follows the Skykomish River from Skykomish, where the valley is narrow, through Gold Bar and beyond, where the valley widens in the Seattle and Everett suburbs (googlemaps.com)

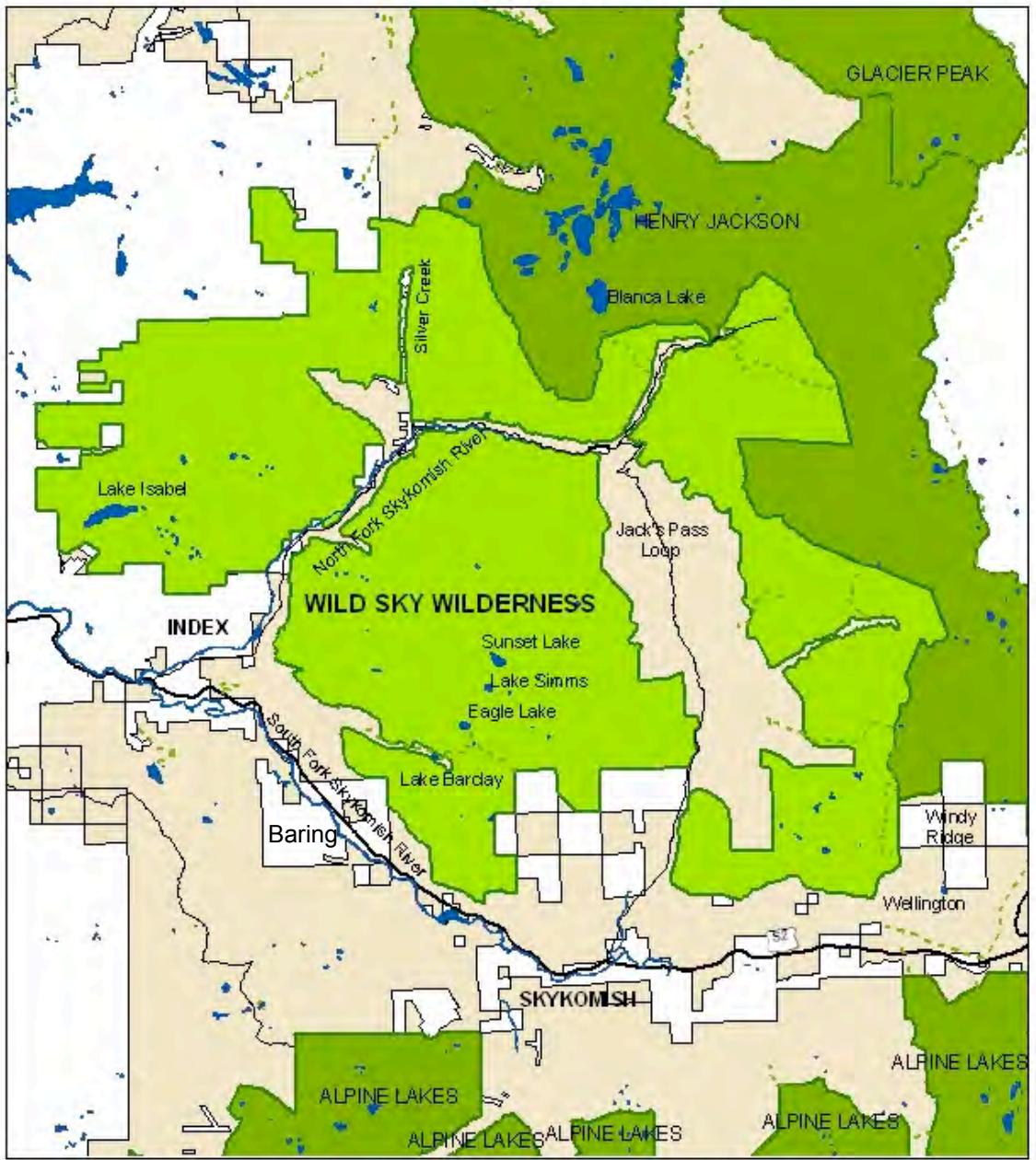
Seattle, but also 30 minutes from the National Forest, Monroe is “branding” itself as a center for “extreme” recreation (Somers 2008, personal communication). Monroe’s population tripled between 1990 and 2000 (Office of Financial Management 1990; U.S. Census Bureau 2000), representative of the growth in these down valley towns.

It is the Upper Skykomish River Valley that was my home for the summer of 2007. I worked as a Forest Technician, contacting visitors, maintaining trailheads, and serving as a presence in the woods. The National Forests have regulations, and I was part of a small team asking people to follow rules and cleaning up after irresponsible visitors. As my co-worker liked to say, “We are defenders of the forest.”

The Skykomish River, named for the people who lived here before European explorers came in search of furs, farmland, minerals, or a new start, is also the namesake of a valley, a town, and a U.S. Forest Service Ranger District. The town was a significant railroad stop seventy-five years ago. It is now home to a decreasing population of 200 people. The ranger district peaked in the 1980s with several buildings and nearly 100 employees, but today the district hires few employees and its historic buildings are being sold. The river, valley, town, and ranger district are all affectionately known as Sky.

Before settlers arrived in the Skykomish Valley, the Skykomish People were seasonally migratory, living in small villages along the rivers where plentiful salmon runs, in combination with food storage technology, allowed for year-round food supplies. Historical population estimates vary, but according to historian Joann Roe, there were 175 Skykomish in 1853, 155 in 1881, and 320 near Sultan and Gold Bar in 1900 (Roe 2002, 150). There were likely far more Skykomish People before Europeans introduced foreign diseases. For most of the year, cedar longhouses provided shelter for 30-40

Wild Sky Wilderness



Legend

- Trail
- River
- Wild Sky Wilderness Proposal
- Lake
- Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest
- Jack's Pass Loop
- Designated Wilderness
- U.S. Highway 2

Figure 4. Place Name Reference Map.

people (Dailey n.d.). In the summer, people traveled into the surrounding mountains to gather huckleberries, harvest cedar, and hunt game. Forest fire may have been used as a tool to encourage berry growth and to attract wildlife to certain hunting grounds, but it is unclear how extensive burning might have been (Whitlock 2002; Krech 2006).

Communities had rights to specific resources (Banner 2007, 234), and although the name Skykomish means “inland people” (Stein 1999), they likely interacted with coastal Salish and peoples on the east side of the Cascades. This was changed with the Treaty of Point Elliott, signed by seven Skykomish tribal members in 1855, which combined over a dozen west-side peoples as the Tulalip Tribes and required residence on the coastal Tulalip Reservation. Today, the towns of Sultan, Startup, Gold Bar, and Index are on the sites of known Skykomish and Snohomish villages (Dailey n.d.).

The Sky Valley towns developed with the railroad, providing the lumber and labor for the first tracks connecting Puget Sound to the east. Surveyors set out into the Cascades in 1859 looking for the shortest way over the formidable range, but the chosen location – Stevens Pass – was not found until 1890, thirty years later (Roe 2002). In a rush to connect the lines to the east, constructing switchbacks was favored over burrowing a tunnel through the mountains, and the line was completed in 1893. The last stakes were driven into the ground a few miles east of Skykomish. By 1900 the Cascade Tunnel was constructed, and Wellington, a growing town just a few miles west of the Cascade crest, became a hub of railroad activity until a disastrous 1910 avalanche. This event led to the construction of the “Eight-Mile Tunnel” through the Cascades, which bypassed Wellington and transferred its strategic importance to the town of Skykomish (Roe 2002, 70). Today, Wellington is a ghost town, along with Martin City, Nippon

(Alpine), Berlin, Halford, and Heybrook, towns near Skykomish that were once home to several hundred people employed by the railroad and logging camps.

Fifteen miles down valley from Skykomish, the town of Index is at the confluence of the North and South forks of the Skykomish River. Originally a mining town, it was first settled in the late 1870s after a fever of claims along Silver Creek (Roe 1995, 150). Towering granite walls surround the scenic town. Mount Index rises 5,700 feet from the valley floor, Gunn Peak, inside the proposed Wild Sky Wilderness, rises to 6,240 feet, and the Index Wall, a cliff popular with rock climbers, provides a 500 foot scenic



Figure 5. Index, WA with the North Fork Skykomish River and Gunn Peak (photo courtesy of Paul Freidel)

backdrop. In the first decade of the 20th century, lumber companies opened mills and a granite works set up operations, memorialized today by a giant saw blade ornamenting Index's town park. People flocked to town and services were built up around the railroad, including thriving stores, hotels, restaurants, and bars. Around World War I, even with many of the town's men off at war, the logging, mining, and associated industries supported a population of eight hundred (Roe

2002, 159). A nearby hot spring became a tourist attraction when it was developed as a twenty-room hotel and bathhouse in the 1930s, and drew visitors through the 1950s (Roe 2002, 153-154). Business stagnated during World War II, and many families left town to find new employment venues (Roe 2002, 159). Today, houses along a grid of streets on each side of the railroad tracks in the town center, and scattered houses hidden in the woods along the riverbanks, are home to Index's 157 residents.

Skykomish, more than Index, is a product of the Great Northern Railroad. John Maloney, who cleared the path for John Stevens on his quest for Stevens Pass, anticipated that the railroad would pass through the area and settled Maloney's Siding in 1890. This was the beginning of what is now known as Skykomish. He opened a general store, founded a lumber company, and served as the first postmaster (Roe 2002). By 1893, Skykomish was "a truly vital link" (Roe 2002, 162) for the Great Northern Railroad, the staging ground for attaching and detaching steam engines to bring trains through the Cascade Tunnel and the point of decision for engineers determining whether to wait out inclement weather or to forge ahead. The Whistling Post Tavern, two hotels, several mills, a barbershop, and theater provided services, employment, and entertainment for the growing town. During the 1920s, when construction of the Eight-Mile Tunnel and the Cascade Highway (now U.S. Route 2) provided abundant employment opportunities, the population grew to several thousand people, but by the 1930s fell to 562 people (Stein 1999). The winding Cascade Highway was straightened in the 1930s, bypassing Skykomish on the north side of the river until the town built a bridge to the highway in 1939.



Figure 6. Skykomish, WA, c. 1913, looking east with businesses on the left and railroad tracks on the right. Skykomish looks very similar today as it did in this historic photograph, but Maloney’s General Store (left) and the Skykomish Inn (center) are vacant. (Photographer, Lee Pickett; photo courtesy of the Skykomish Historical Society)

From 1927, Skykomish was a particularly important piece of the Great Northern Railroad operations. Poor ventilation in the Eight-Mile Tunnel prevented diesel engines from passing through, so electric engines were attached in Skykomish. This provided steady employment for residents until 1956, when improved technology and a system of giant fans precluded the need for electric-powered trains. This resulted in a second population decline. Today the town is home to just over 200 people. Over twenty trains – including Amtrak’s Empire Builder – pause in the center of town every day and wait their turn to pass through the one lane tunnel, but Skykomish is not a scheduled stop to pick up passengers.

Surrounding the upper Sky Valley towns, the boundaries of the National Forest define town limits. With the Forest Reserve Act of 1897, the Washington National Forest spanned the east and west sides of the Cascade Crest. In 1908, this was divided into four National Forests: on the east side, Chelan/Okanagan and Wenatchee, and on the west side, Washington/Mount Baker and Snoqualmie (The Forest History Society n.d.). In 1974 the two west side Forests were combined as Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Today, this Forest stretches north from Mount Rainier National Park, wraps around the west side of North Cascades National Park, and ends at the Canadian border (Figure 7). The Forest is divided into four ranger districts, from south to north: Snoqualmie, Skykomish, Darrington, and Mount Baker. Of these, Skykomish is the smallest in land area, employees, and miles of trails. However, its proximity to Seattle – only an hour and a half drive – and its location along U.S. Route 2 – one of two main passages over the Cascades – makes it a popular destination for urban residents seeking rural recreation.

Although recreation opportunities in surrounding forest land and developed hot springs drew some tourists to the area in the past, the Sky Valley towns have been historically dependent on resource extraction – mining and timber – and the railroad. Photos of the towns show stacks of logs waiting to be milled and trucks carrying trees over ten feet in diameter, scenes of the past. A local cement plant and the last of Skykomish's mills closed in the late 1960s, cutting costs by sending rough logs to the coast where they could be turned into lumber in Everett and loaded onto barges for shipment, leading to another decrease in Skykomish's population (Brown 2008, personal communication). By 1990, there was already a significant displacement of timber



Figure 7. Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest (MBS 2000)

employees in the Sky Valley, with only two of Index's residents and sixteen of Skykomish's residents employed in "Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries" (Office of Financial Management 1990).

Today, Index and Skykomish are forming new identities based on the natural resources that surround them. Skykomish's new "visioning plan" states, "Skykomish is now looking toward the tourist and recreation industries for economic development by taking advantage of its unique 'alpine' location along the wild and scenic Skykomish River" (Wagoner, et.al. 2005, 9). Index's Comprehensive Plan similarly emphasizes developing a renewed economy around recreation (Albert 2008, personal communication). Demographic shifts are indicative of this transition. In the 1990 census, no one in Index was listed as being employed in the recreation and entertainment industries, and this category only accounted for 2.9% of the people employed in Skykomish (Office of Financial Management 1990). By 2000, the census category of "Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services" was Index's largest employment category, accounting for over a quarter of the town's employees, and tied with manufacturing as Skykomish's second largest employment base (U.S. Census Bureau 2000).

Evidence of a dislocated economy is seen in a comparison of census data for Index and Skykomish from 1990 to 2000. While the general level of education is increasing, the residents' median age is also increasing, a sign that there are few job opportunities for the towns' young adults. Seventeen winding miles closer to the coast than Skykomish, Index is becoming increasingly popular for people commuting to work in the Everett and Seattle area, demonstrated by Index's growing population and rising

median household income. Statistics are more indicative of economic dislocation in Skykomish, where the population has dropped in the last ten years and the median household income is decreasing.

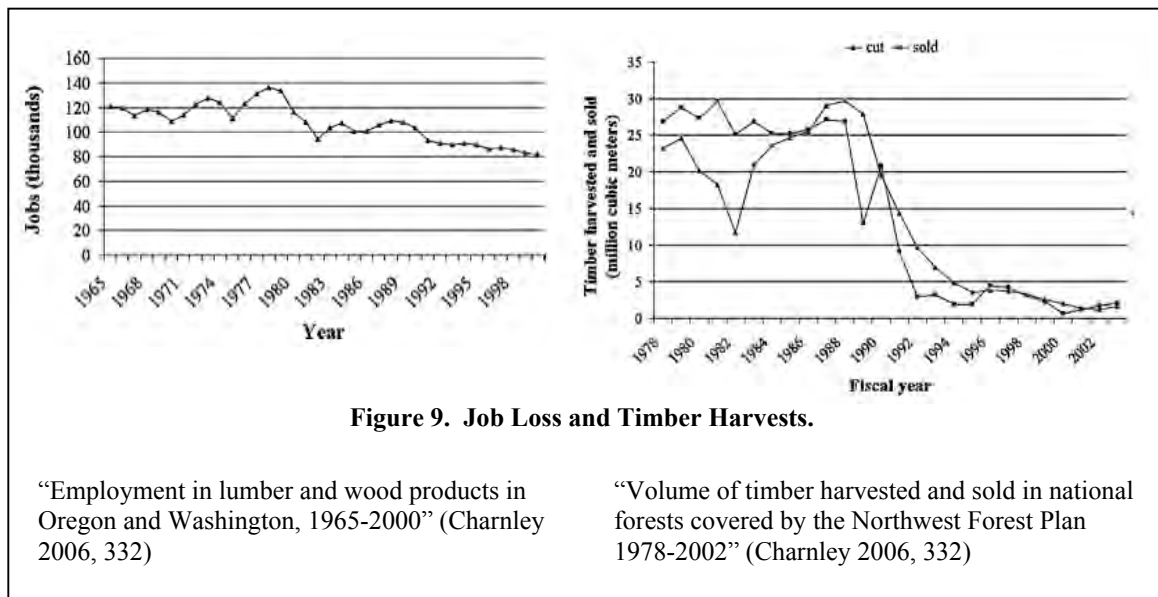
Skykomish	1990	2000	U.S. 2000
Population	273	214	
Median Age	34.8	45.9	35.3
% with High School Diploma	82.6	85.2	80.4
% with Bachelor's or Higher	19.2	21.3	24.4
Median Household Income (1999 dollars)	47,869	45,357	41,994
% Unemployed	0.79	5.4	3.7
% Individuals Below Poverty Level	17.1	9	12.4
Index	1990	2000	U.S. 2000
Population	139	157	
Median Age	36.8	42.8	35.3
% with High School Diploma	97	91.7	80.4
% with Bachelor's or Higher	14	18.3	24.4
Median Household Income (1999 dollars)	22,075	43,125	41,994
% Unemployed	3.73	5.1	3.7
% Individuals Below Poverty Level	33.33	16.9	12.4
Figure 8. Demographic Data for Skykomish and Index, 1990 and 2000. (Office of Financial Management 1990; U.S. Census Bureau 2000)			

Although Skykomish may not have been entirely dependent on timber harvests after the last mill left town in the 1970s, the industry still defined the community and the town was adversely affected by recent regional changes in forestry. In the Pacific Northwest, between 1985 and 1989, employment in the wood products industry dropped substantially due to mechanization, decreased capital investment, mill closures, economic recession, and low demand (Charnley 2006, 332). This decline was exacerbated by the “Timber Wars” of the late 1980s and early 1990s, a controversy over timber harvests, endangered species, and old growth forests that brought “loggers” head to head against “environmentalists.”

The Northwest Forest Plan

In a 1991 U.S. District Court case, the National Audubon Society and the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund charged that harvesting old growth forests was detrimental to the Northern Spotted Owl, listed as threatened in 1990, and other species protected by The Endangered Species Act. Federal judge William Dwyer issued a court injunction on all old growth harvests, putting thousands of people out of work (Helvoight 2003). In response to the economic chaos, President Clinton organized a Forest Summit in Portland, Oregon, meeting with stakeholders and assigning scientists to study the issue, together creating a compromise in 1993 – the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) (Dietrich 1992; Thomas 2006). The Plan created zones within affected federal forests:

“Congressional Withdrawals,” primarily referring to wilderness areas, would not allow any timber harvests; “Late Successional Reserves,” forests over eighty years old, would be preserved; “Riparian Areas” (accounting for forty percent of the land outside Late Successional Reserves and Congressional withdrawals) would have limitations to protect perennial and intermittent streams; “Adaptive Management Areas” (six percent of the

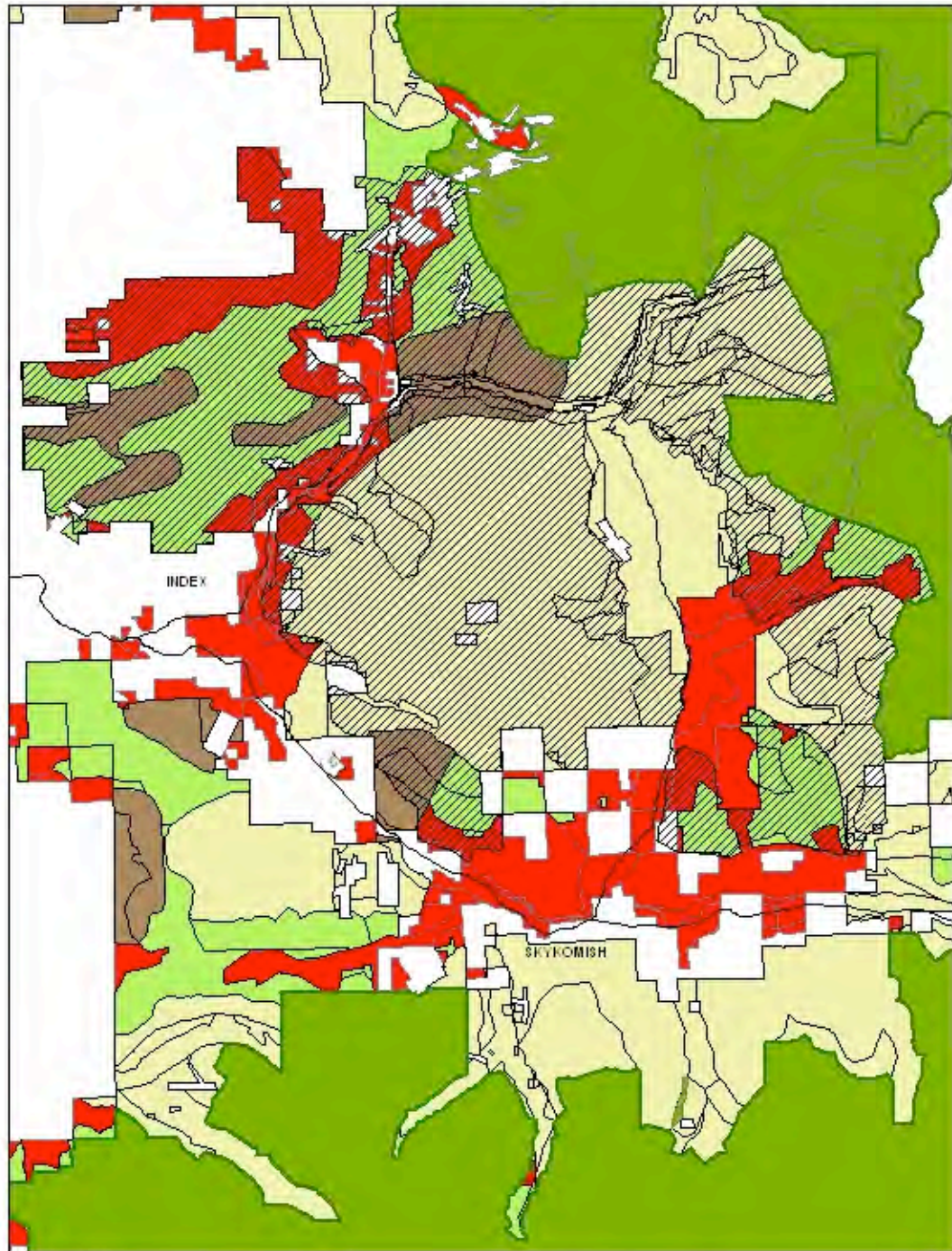


Plan area) could be harvested using experimental means in order to promote advances in forestry; and “Matrix Areas,” (sixteen percent of the Plan area) would provide the bulk of the harvestable lands (Thomas et. al. 2006). This system, it was believed, would simultaneously protect forest ecosystems while stabilizing timber harvests, and would therefore stabilize the economy.

Fifteen years later, there is academic consensus on two points: ecosystem protection has been fairly successful, but socioeconomic support has failed (Charnley 2006; Thomas et. al. 2006; Power 2006; Buttolph 2006). Prescribing decreased harvests, the Northwest Forest Plan anticipated correlated decreases in employment in the forestry services sector, but also intended for job loss to be offset by new employment in ecosystem restoration (Charnley et.al. 2006, viii). However, due to decreased Forest Service budgets, few new jobs were created. Anticipating economic hardship, community assistance programs were built into the Northwest Forest Plan, but according to a Forest Service study, “Economic assistance grants benefited communities that had the staff and resources to develop projects and apply for monies, but provided little benefit to communities without those resources” (Buttolph et. al. 2006, ii).

Further, the Northwest Forest Plan did not account for the strength of public support for ending *all* old growth harvests. Jack Ward Thomas, Jerry Franklin, John Gordon, and K. Norman Johnson – the researchers who provided the science behind the Northwest Forest Plan – evaluated the plan in 2006 (Thomas et. al. 2006). During the first decade, they had anticipated that half of the total harvest would come from forests over 200 years old and that harvests on private lands would increase. However, due to a lack of personnel to carry out timber surveys, legal challenges from environmentalists,

Northwest Forest Plan Management Designations



Legend

- Jack's Pass
 - U.S. Highway 2
 - ▨ Wild Sky Wilderness Proposal
 - Congressionally Withdrawn
 - Administratively Withdrawn
 - Late Successional Reserves
 - Late Successional Old Growth
 - Available
- 0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Figure 10. Northwest Forest Plan Management Designations.

and public controversy over old growth harvests, private harvests did not increase and few old growth forests were harvested. There was little experimentation in Adaptive Management Areas, and little money available for watershed restoration. Furthermore, decreased timber harvests meant decreased funds for federal employees to work towards achieving the plan's goals. Following the enactment of the Northwest Forest Plan there was a net increase in the amount of Old Growth stands, an important piece of the Northwest Forest Plan's ecological goals, but timber harvests decreased more than had been anticipated, drastically changing Pacific Northwest economies.

The diminishing timber industry significantly affected federal agencies, namely the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), which had provided 36% of Oregon and Washington's total annual timber harvest between 1965 and 1989 (Charnley 2006, 332). The BLM, less dependent on timber revenue than the Forest Service, was not substantially affected by economic fluctuations. However, because reductions in Forest Service revenue were not matched by increased federal funding, the Northwest Forest Plan dramatically changed Forest Service operations. Between 1993 and 2002, the USFS budget dropped 35% (Charnley 2006, 337) and "...the USFS lost 3066 full-time equivalent positions on its 17 plan-area units, or 36% of its workforce. These losses led the USFS to close or substantially downsize 23% of its field offices that had previously housed a forest supervisor or district ranger" (Charnley 2006, 334). These changes not only represent fewer employment opportunities, but also a decreased capacity to maintain infrastructure and fulfill management goals:

One of the consequences of the staff reductions and budget cuts is the lack of a Forest Service presence in the forest, resulting in less maintenance of facilities, roads and trails; less face-to-face contact with campers; and less

law enforcement capability. Forest Service employees reported an increase in uncontrolled, unmanaged recreation (Buttolph et. al. 2006, 26).

In sum, the Forest Service employees are now expected to do more work with fewer people and a smaller budget.

The Skykomish Ranger District did not escape this downsize. The district fire crew disbanded, and full time employees were given notice. The district's historic barns and houses are being surveyed for sale, with the revenue going to the U.S. Treasury, and there is talk of dividing the district in two, combining with districts to the north and south. In the 1990 census, government workers made up 40.5% of Skykomish's workforce; by 2000, that number was down to 26.4% (Office of Financial Management 1990; U.S. Census Bureau 2000).¹ These reductions are not only a problem for the Forest Service or the district, but for the communities they serve. Federal jobs provide good wages, benefits, and skill development, and employees often take on leadership roles within the rural communities (Buttolph et. al. 2006, 14). Even though the last mill left town in the late-1960s and the community was already somewhat distanced from the timber industry, the consequences of the spotted owl controversy significantly affected Skykomish.

While Index's urban proximity has helped it adjust to the changing economy, Skykomish is having more difficulty. However, its prospects are improving. The railroad's downtown switching yard once provided secure employment, but it also created a superfund site. Burlington Northern, the company that inherited the Great Northern Railroad, is being held responsible for the environmental degradation.

¹ Although these numbers include local, state, and federal employees, considering the town's historic connection to the Skykomish ranger district and the significant reductions in district employees, U.S. Forest Service financial constraints have surely affected the town.

Currently, the company is actively removing contaminated soil and is building new infrastructure. Sidewalks now line the street, a new riverfront levee doubles as a walkway, and a wastewater treatment facility will be constructed soon, amenities that may make Skykomish more desirable for development and more attractive for tourists.

Designating Wilderness

The Wild Sky Wilderness proposal initially came to my attention in June of 2007 on my first day of seasonal employment in the Skykomish Ranger District, shortly after signing my name to a stack of official papers and shortly before trying on the official green denim slacks. I was standing in a hallway outside my supervisor's office next to two maps, one showing the roads washed out by the previous fall's flooding and the other showing the boundaries of the proposed wilderness. Asking my supervisor about the proposal, I was surprised to learn about his ambivalence towards the creation of Wild Sky.

My reaction was much more enthusiastic. From the very beginning of this relationship with the proposed wilderness, my immediate thoughts were on the local town. Surely, wilderness designation would be embraced by all. It would be a boon for the struggling economy. I said out loud, "Wild Sky Wilderness?! With a name like that, everyone will come to Skykomish!" That, of course, is the idea behind the poetic name. Sky, the Sky Valley, the Sky Deli, Sky Taxidermy, Sky Bakery...and coming soon, Wild Sky.

Over the course of the summer I learned through conversations with co-workers that the story behind Wild Sky was much more nuanced than I first supposed. I was

surprised to hear that my fellow employees, those people who have made working in the district their life's work – not just a summer job – had mixed feelings about the wilderness proposal. I didn't press the issue, but as I spent my evenings reading international community conservation literature, I couldn't get the work I was doing off my mind. I began to think about the town I was living in – community – and the National Forest where I was working – conservation – and how the two fit together. I developed the idea that if the people visiting National Forests are not included in conservation decisions, then they will not feel ownership of the forests; if they do not feel ownership, then they will not enter the forest as stewards; if they do not enter as stewards, then people like me will have to clean up after them. I began to consider community conservation as a way to better defend the forest, perhaps a type of preemptive attack against irresponsible visitors.

Although National Forests and the wilderness areas they contain belong to the entire country, in essence these lands belong to the forests' neighboring communities. These "lands of many uses" are intended to provide extractive resources and recreation. However, considering that National Forest land has historically been leased at bargain rates to logging companies with export interests,² "sustained yield" timber harvests have resembled private corporations' clear-cuts, and the Northwest Forest Plan has limited available logging land (Egan 1990; Dietrich 1991; Hirt 1994), the primary benefit may now be recreation. Unlike National Parks, which are advertised across the country and around the world, National Forests are not destinations for visitors from afar, but rather they are recreational locations for residents who live relatively close by.

² "By the late 1980s as much as 40 percent of Washington's timber harvest was going overseas, much of it never milled in the United States" (Dietrich 1992, 122).

Despite this relatively local use of National Forests,³ regulations are often mandated from above, at a federal level, and enforced by outsiders. This is a tradition documented in Herbert Kaufman's 1960 book *The Forest Ranger*, a long-time bible for Forest Service personnel. Employees were routinely transferred in order to prevent them from becoming rooted to one place and being influenced by the community, rather than federal headquarters (Tipple and Wellman 1991). Tipple and Wellman wrote a 1991 public policy article updating Kaufman's classic, noting a trend towards community involvement, diversification of staff, and a shift from field-based to office-based district rangers. Although several pieces of legislation – including the Wilderness Act (1964), the National Environmental Policy Act (1969), and the National Forest Management Act (1976), among others – require community participation (Hirt 1994; Tipple and Wellman 1991), many decisions are still made by Forest Service personnel or, in the case of wilderness, by a far removed Congress.

For practical purposes, in the United States the definition of wilderness is decided on a case-by-case basis through Congressional negotiation with stakeholders – the people, industries, and organizations affected by the location, extent, and regulations of designated wilderness areas. Prior to 1964, regional and federal Forest Service personnel applied the terms wilderness, primitive area, and canoe area to federal lands managed as *de facto* wilderness. However, they could also change the administrative labels and accompanying management policies with the stroke of a pen. This seemingly ephemeral quality of federal wilderness was an impetus for the 1964 Wilderness Act, which sought to make designation more permanent by giving Congress the authority to recognize

³ According to Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest monitoring results, most visitors are from Seattle and its outlying suburbs (MBS 2001).

wilderness. In turn, designation became a difficult and lengthy bureaucratic process, but one which was more accessible to the general public. Due to this democratization of wilderness, rather than being the brainchild of rurally based Forest Service personnel, inception of wilderness can begin with politicians, individual activists, special interest groups, or any manner of person who can get a congressional representative's attention. This is the foundation for public involvement in wilderness legislation.

Although the Wilderness Act outlines how the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior are to incorporate public notification and hearings into their wilderness recommendations, there are not similar instructions for Congressional recommendations. Wilderness designation – a federal land use decision – is an inherently controversial issue, so it would be political suicide for elected officials to actively promote legislation that their constituents do not support. Working towards Washington State's first wilderness addition since 1984, Senator Murray (D-WA) and Representative Larsen (D-WA) made a deliberate decision to aim for broad public support. This was not solely a concern guided by conservation paradigms that point toward the benefits of local inclusion in management decisions, but also – and perhaps more important for them – a concern for the stability of their own political positions.

This leads to questions of the scale and degree of public involvement. In the case of Wild Sky, "local" could be interpreted as the home state, the Congressional district, the entire Skykomish valley, or its directly neighboring towns. Within the continuum of scale, there is a difference between "local" and "public" involvement. This is especially complex in the case of Wild Sky.

On clear days in many cities, people go to the mountains; on clear days in Seattle, the mountains come to the people. From many points in the city, a glance in any direction reveals the Olympic Mountains or the Cascade Range. Bus stop benches are surrounded on three sides by clear Plexiglas painted with a pattern of the ocean, mountains, and stormy skies. Whether people leave the city and head for the mountains or not, the surrounding peaks and the artwork they inspire define the city. This regional urban affection for wild areas leads Seattle residents to value the surrounding mountains as “their backyard,” while Sultan and Skykomish residents see the same mountains as “their backyard.” However, to include a large urban center – whether Seattle, Everett, Snohomish, or Monroe – in a definition of “local” is to perpetuate a power structure that politically marginalizes the small rural towns up valley. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, “local” refers to the towns that are the closest gateways to Wild Sky: Index and Skykomish.

Thesis Structure

This thesis begins with an examination of key components of the legislative process, first analyzing the process of public involvement (Chapter 2), and then evaluating the possibilities for increased local involvement (Chapter 3). In Chapter 4 I examine the local relevance of the “pristine myth,” the belief that wilderness is a natural landscape wholly untouched by humans. This analysis is guided by local and regional histories, evidence of historical human impacts on adjacent wilderness areas, and conservationists’ intentions for wilderness definitions. Particularly important in this discussion is the 2007 work of Kevin Marsh, *Drawing Lines in the Forest*, which

chronicles the creation of Northwest wilderness areas and the negotiations over their boundaries, as well as *Tomorrow's Wilderness*, a 1963 publication of the 8th Wilderness Conference. Although a “pristine” wilderness standard has not been applied in practice either regionally or nationally, the pristine argument is used by opponents to mask deeper concerns over power structures that result in economic change and political marginalization.

The research then progresses to a more complete analysis of the actors themselves and their contexts. In order to fully understand both proponents’ and opponents’ political, economic, and social concerns regarding the pending legislation, this discussion is divided in two parts (Chapters 5 and 6). First, I evaluate the ecological arguments for Wild Sky in relation to their ideological and political roots, as well as the economic aspirations and recreational promises embedded in advocates’ rhetoric. This dominant perspective is followed by an analysis of opponents’ stated concerns, which represent underlying feelings of political displacement and economic marginalization. Together, these analyses address the popular perceptions and representations of Wild Sky and the arguments both for and against the proposal.

While Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate which voices have been heard on Wild Sky and why, the examination would be incomplete without including the views of the regional and local Forest Service employees (Chapter 7), whose expertise has not been adequately utilized. Working within a top-down agency structure, local Forest Service employees’ management concerns – issues of decreased funding and the potential inability to follow through with public expectations – do not make their way into newspapers or legislative hearings. The Wild Sky Act calls for old roads to be

“naturalized” and trails to be built, but environmental regulations such as the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the Northwest Forest Plan make it difficult for employees to carry out this mandate. Many of these concerns have not been heard and addressed, a problem partially rooted in historic conflict between wilderness advocates and the Forest Service. Local employees do not constitute a voting block, but their experience and understanding of complex management regulations is important in shaping wilderness boundaries, regulations, and implementation.

In short, exclusion of local stakeholders, people who will be affected by the application of management decisions, is an obstacle to achieving conservation goals. Conservation of the natural resources that belong to all U.S. citizens – rocks, trees, water, wildlife – is made difficult when alienated neighbors do not understand or agree with the Forest Service’s management plans. In discussing American forestry’s early goals and challenges, David Clary writes, “public acceptance must be earned, not demanded” (Clary 1986, 8). Washington State’s Congressional delegation made a positive effort towards earning this acceptance, and they were largely successful, but local opportunities for involvement could have been expanded. Elected officials may do well to go back to a principle of earned acceptance, giving local communities a true stake in management decisions. In an era of decreased National Forest funding, perhaps an era of increased community involvement should be ushered in whereby neighboring residents play a lead role in influencing land use policy, and are employed as the “face” of the Forest Service.

CHAPTER 2

THE PROPOSAL PROCESS

The 1964 Wilderness Act places wilderness designation within the democratic process, but the level of public and community involvement in this process is not outlined in the legislation. In 2000, while looking at Washington State's first wilderness in over twenty years, Senator Murray (D-WA) and Representative Larsen (D-WA) – the key elected officials who have worked to draft, negotiate, and propose the Wild Sky Wilderness Act – decided to aim for broad public involvement in the process. Although the act has not yet passed through Congress, politicians have consistently applauded these Washington legislators' efforts towards community participation in boundary and regulation negotiations. At the 2004 hearings, Mark Rey, Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, said on behalf of President Bush's administration, "We recognize and commend the Washington delegation for its ongoing collaborative approach and local involvement..." (Legislative Hearing no. 108-105 2004, 12). This refers to three public meetings in 2001, numerous negotiations with user-groups, and extensive signatures of support from area businesses and politicians.¹ As a result of these efforts, the process of creating Wild Sky has been more inclusive than most other wilderness proposals. Nevertheless, the process could be improved.

Section 3 of the 1964 Wilderness Act, entitled "National Wilderness Preservation System—Extent of the System," detailed the procedure for designating additional

¹ In 2001, an Index town meeting and two workshops in Seattle and Monroe offered opportunities for public participation. The Washington Wilderness Coalition recorded endorsements from 77 elected officials in Snohomish County, more than 100 businesses from Monroe to Skykomish, and more than 10,000 state citizens (WWC 2004).

wilderness. First, it called for the Department of Agriculture to study the areas already designated as “wilderness,” “wild,” or “canoe” and to make wilderness recommendations to the President, who would then make recommendations to the House and Senate, which would approve wilderness designation through an Act of Congress. For the Secretary of the Interior, the Act called for review of all roadless areas of 5,000 acres or more within the department’s jurisdiction, for a recommendation to the President, and for the requisite Act of Congress. This process is outlined in subsection (d)(1):

(A) give such public notice of the proposed action as they deem appropriate, including publication in the Federal Register and in a newspaper having general circulation in the area or areas in the vicinity of the affected land;

(B) hold a public hearing or hearings at a location or locations convenient to the area affected. The hearings shall be announced through such means as the respective Secretaries involved deem appropriate, including notices in the Federal Register and in newspapers of general circulation in the area...

(C) at least thirty days before the date of a hearing advise the Governor of each State...in which the lands are located, and Federal departments and agencies concerned, and invite such officials and Federal agencies to submit their views on the proposed action... (Beach 2004, 13-14).

For the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior, the wilderness recommendation process clearly includes opportunities for local public involvement. However, there are no such instructions for Congress. It is up to individual elected officials to determine how they will go about drafting wilderness legislation.

Figure 11. A Timeline of Wild Sky² (figure continues on the next page)

1970s	RARE II identified some of the “Wild Sky” lands as roadless
1976	Alpine Lakes Management Area, including Alpine Lakes Wilderness, is established south of U.S. Route 2
1984	In response to timber industry lobbying for “release language” for secure logging lands, Congress passes the Washington State Wilderness Act of 1984
1990	The Spotted Owl is listed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife as a Threatened Species
1980s/90s	“Timber Wars” increase tensions between “loggers” and “environmentalists”
1993	President Clinton holds a Forest Summit in Portland, OR resulting in formation of the Northwest Forest Plan
1995	Congress passes and Clinton signs the Salvage Logging Rider, temporarily suspending environmental regulations in order to increase harvest of dead and dying trees, as well as permitting sales (back to 1990) of harvests held up for environmental reasons in Oregon and Washington Washington State wilderness advocates see Wilderness designation as the only way to protect federal lands from logging Door-to-door canvassing campaigns begin to foster support for a new Wilderness movement
1999	Weekend meeting at Wenatchee Lake, organized by the Washington Wilderness Coalition, educates invited organizations and individuals about grassroots organizing, letter writing, and wilderness advocacy
2000	Meeting in Index home identifies wilderness support from key local figures, causing the Wild Sky area to be selected by advocates and politicians for the state-wide wilderness campaign
2001	Senator Murray and Representative Larsen organize a tour to the Wild Sky area to familiarize journalists, local politicians, and the District Ranger with the proposal Meeting in the Index Town Hall. Local citizens see a rough draft of the proposal and have an opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns to a panel Workshop at the Monroe High School organized by the Congressional offices. Several snowmobilers indicate that lands they use are included in the proposal Workshop at the Seattle Mountaineer’s Club organized by the Congressional offices

² This timeline is primarily compiled from documents published by the Washington Wilderness Coalition (WWC 2004; WWC n.d.), but also from newspaper articles and interviews. The Washington Wilderness Coalition, founded in 1979 with the goal of bringing together citizen wilderness organizations throughout the state, is the lead advocacy organization for Wild Sky.

(figure continued from the previous page)

	Senator Murray and Representative Larsen’s offices hold several hour-long meetings in Everett with constituents, interest groups, and local stakeholders that had contacted Congressional offices or were identified by the Forest Service
2002	Congressional offices brief the Tulalip Tribes Congressional offices brief the Snohomish County Executive U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee Hearing on Wild Sky Wilderness bill The House Resources Committee passes the Wild Sky Wilderness Act unanimously without a hearing Wild Sky Wilderness Act of 2002 passes unanimously in the Senate The House of Representatives adjourns without acting on Wild Sky ³
2003	Congressional offices meet with the Snohomish County Farm Bureau Monroe City Council Public Meeting results in passage of supportive resolution Representative Larsen’s office meets with the Washington State and Snohomish County Farm Bureaus U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee Hearing on the Wild Sky Wilderness Act A festival is organized in Index to celebrate Wild Sky and raise awareness of the proposal. Opponents also make an appearance, holding a separate riverside rally. Congressman Larsen speaks with both groups. Snohomish City Council Public Meeting results in passage of supportive resolution
2004	Wild Sky Wilderness Act of 2003 passes unanimously in the Senate Senator Murray and Representatives Larsen and Nethercutt meet to negotiate compromise legislation. Nethercutt’s proposal would have included wilderness and a national recreation area designation, but nothing was agreed upon. U.S. House Resources Subcommittee Hearing on Wild Sky Wilderness Bill
2005	The House of Representatives adjourns without acting on Wild Sky Representative Pombo (R-CA) takes a helicopter tour of Wild Sky Wild Sky Wilderness Act of 2005 passes unanimously in the Senate
2006	The House of Representatives adjourns without acting on Wild Sky
2007	Wild Sky Wilderness Act passes unanimously in the House of Representatives Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee unanimously approves the Wild Sky Wilderness Act
2008	The Wild Sky Wilderness Act awaits a vote in the Senate

³ Congress operates on two-year cycles (2001-2002, 2003-2004, etc.) and bills must be approved in both the House and Senate during this time. The Wild Sky Wilderness Act was passed unanimously in the Senate in 2002, 2003, and 2005, but the House of Representatives did not vote on these bills in the same Congressional year. In 2007, the Act passed unanimously in the House of Representatives for the first time, but now awaits a vote in the Senate before the Congressional year ends at the close of 2008.

The Beginning of Wild Sky

Many people think Wild Sky started with a Seattle-based proposal around the year 2000. However, it began long before this (Figure 11), when most of its acres were included in the second Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II) in the late 1970s (MBS 2000). Acquiescing to the timber industry's lobby for "release language" that would establish designated harvest lands, Congress compromised by designating new wilderness areas while simultaneously setting aside other lands for more intensive timber harvests. Consequently, the 1984 Washington Wilderness Act neglected to include the Wild Sky area, even as it created close to 850,000 acres of wilderness. Although an inventoried roadless area, Wild Sky was omitted from the Washington Wilderness Act, likely because its low elevation forests were valuable to the still thriving timber industry.

A second prelude to Wild Sky was the 1995 Salvage Logging Rider.⁴ Emerging from the Timber Wars, the Salvage Logging Rider

was intended to expedite 'salvage' logging of dead or dying trees by suspending environmental laws and limiting environmental judicial review. However, the rider [was interpreted] by the courts to allow logging of healthy old-growth timber without environmental or judicial review as well (Dorn 1995).

Because the rider opened areas to logging that had once seemed protected through environmental regulations, environmental organizations saw wilderness as the only designation safe from such political maneuvering. Acting upon this fear, the Salvage Logging Rider was an impetus for a renewed Washington wilderness movement.

Finally, Wild Sky began most directly in 2001, when the proposal was selected to be Washington's next wilderness. At that time, the designation process went public with

⁴ The Salvage Logging Rider was attached to an appropriations bill authorizing emergency relief following the April 19, 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing.

the help of three meetings. These events are often mentioned when Wild Sky's proponents highlight local participation.

Index Town Meeting

The first meeting, held in Index on July 16, 2001, is often erroneously perceived as having been organized by Senator Murray and Representative Larsen's offices. Although representatives from these offices did attend, the meeting was organized by Index's mayor and town council. The Washington Wilderness Coalition accurately lists the meeting as "Index Town Hall Meeting on Wild Sky Wilderness" (WWC 2004).

At a June 4, 2001 town council meeting, Kem Hunter, then mayor of Index, introduced a resolution in support of Wild Sky. This was tabled until the next meeting, held on July 2, 2001, at which time the "issue was discussed at length," residents voiced concerns, and one letter of opposition was received. Unable to reach a decision either for or against Wild Sky, the town council decided to pose the issue to its residents, scheduling a town meeting for July 16th.

Individual accounts of this meeting include slightly different details, but generally people agree that it was well attended and energetic. At this time, the proposal was in its infant stages. Attendees were given black and white 11x17 inch maps with a proposed boundary roughly drawn on (Figure 12). Detailed GIS maps of the proposal had yet to be created and discussions of specific policies and regulations within the borders were just getting underway. The proposal at this stage was little more than a basic idea drawn with a Sharpee marker, leaving little solid information for the panel to respond to.

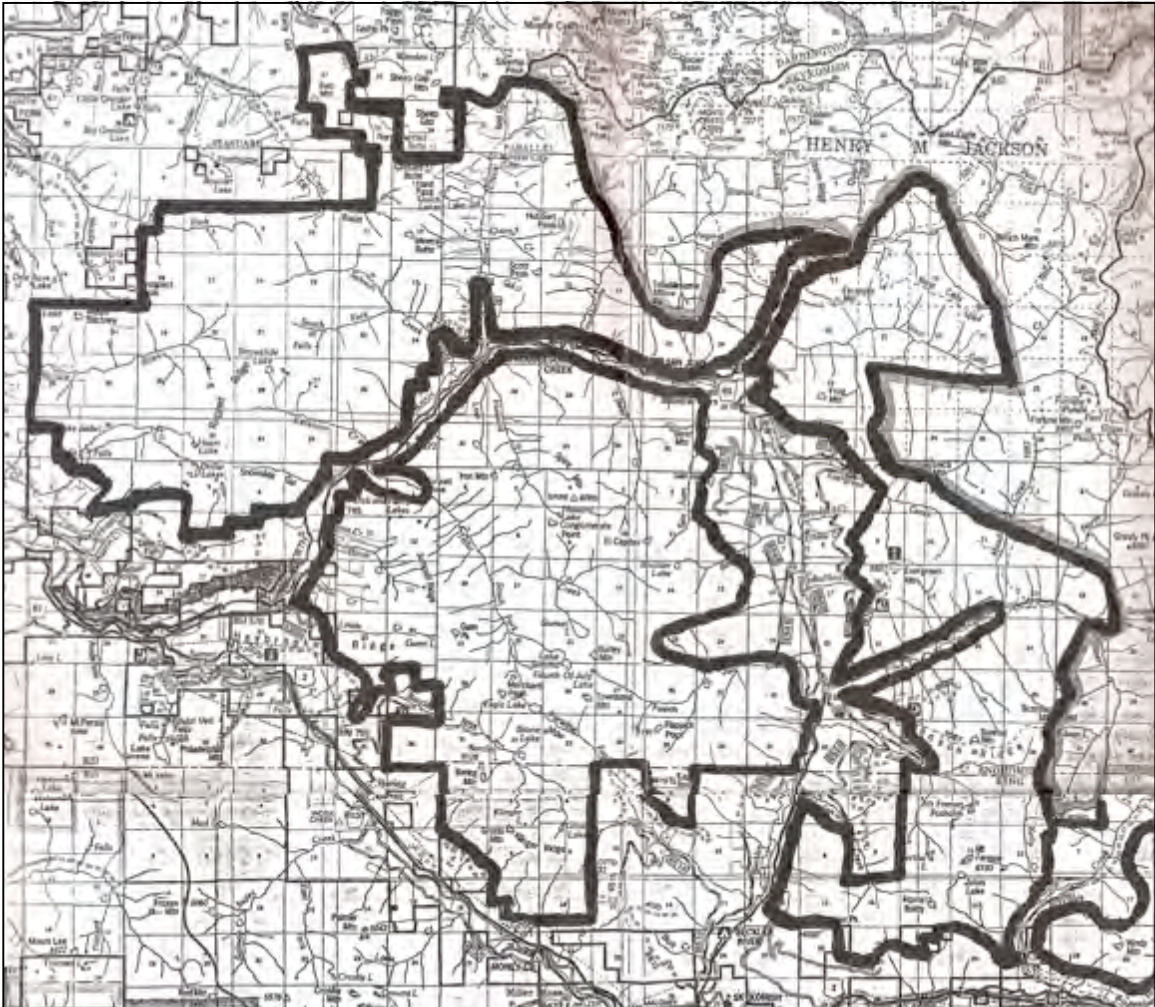


Figure 12. Wild Sky Wilderness as proposed at the Index Town Meeting, 2001. Original map was 11x17 inches. (Courtesy of John Engber)

Nonetheless, a panel of individuals including Gary Paull (Mount Baker-Snoqualmie Wilderness and Trails Program Coordinator), Rick McGuire (Snohomish County resident), Barbara Busse (Skykomish District Ranger), and Kem Hunter (Index Mayor) fielded questions from the audience. Although their job titles and their location in the front of the room may have given the audience the impression that they were Wild Sky “experts,” this was not entirely the case. In addition to a general lack of information on the proposal, short lead-time did not allow members of the panel to prepare for the meeting. For example, Gary Paull was notified of the meeting only days before, and did

not know it would take on a panel format until he arrived (Paull 2008, personal communication). However, despite these organizational problems, Index's mayor and town council made a substantial effort towards local participation by organizing this initial meeting.

Monroe and Seattle Workshops

In September 2001, the Congressional offices organized two public "workshops," a term used by Senator Murray's State Director, John Engber (Engber 2008, personal communication). One workshop was held in the Monroe high school, the other in the Seattle Mountaineers Club. Organizers felt that Monroe, the largest city near Wild Sky, would be a convenient place for local residents to voice their opinions, and that a Seattle location would provide an opportunity to hear from urban residents who use the National Forest lands. Both meetings were publicized in newspapers, but most people I spoke with heard about the meetings through organization affiliations. As opposed to Index's panel-style meeting, the Monroe and Seattle workshops offered tables set up with draft maps and comment sheets, which were to be later reviewed by the Congressional staff. The Monroe meeting is particularly important for having identified conflicts with snowmobile use, an issue that led to negotiations with representatives of the Washington State Snowmobile Association.

These three meetings in Index, Monroe, and Seattle provided opportunities for public involvement in the wilderness proposal, but the process was not perfect. One clear problem, raised by Wild Sky's opponents, was that the Seattle meeting was held in the Mountaineers' Club, hardly a neutral public venue (Halley 2008, personal

communication). Founded in 1906 as a recreational club, the Mountaineers' website states,

In addition to the recreational activities we pursue, The Mountaineers works to ensure that wilderness areas are preserved and protected through the actions of our Conservation, Recreation Resources and Stewardship divisions. Volunteer members track issues, mobilize members, perform trail maintenance, work with coalitions and lobby legislators (local and national) (the Mountaineers, 2008).

With a mission to promote wilderness and passive recreation, the organization has a clear bias in favor of Wild Sky and against motorized vehicles. Further, the Mountaineers were closely involved with advocacy in the 1970s to create the Alpine Lakes Wilderness (Marsh 2007, 83). Although it was important to hold a workshop in Seattle, since many of the Forest's visitors are from the Seattle metro area (MBS 2001), a neutral venue should have been selected.

A second problem is that Congressional offices did not directly organize the Index meeting and neglected to return to the upper Skykomish Valley for further discussion as the proposal was developed. A map of the proposal was hung in the Index Town Hall window, and after local complaints that it appeared as if the town offices were in support of Wild Sky, the town clerk posted a display alongside the map with arguments both for and against the proposal (Albert 2008, personal communication). This, again, was a local initiative, not a case of Congressional outreach.

The greatest Congressional contributions to public participation were through negotiations with stakeholders. Boundaries were altered, regulations adapted, and many opponents became neutral, if not supportive of Wild Sky. A 12,000 acre area known as Windy Ridge was left out of the proposal in exchange for a neutral stance from the Washington State Snowmobile Association (WSSA). The Seaplane Pilots Association

was assuaged with language included in the bill to permit continued floatplane access to Lake Isabel. The Backcountry Horsemen Association of Washington was assured that they would be allowed to ride on Wild Sky's trails. Snohomish County offices were appeased with language authorizing the use of helicopters to construct and maintain a repeater site within Wild Sky. Many of these negotiated boundaries and regulations indicate a shift in power dynamics from an emphasis on the voice of the timber industry to the voice of recreation organizations.

This process of public involvement, while not perfect, was the route chosen by Washington's Congressional delegation as the best way to achieve broad support for Wild Sky. Although a procedure for Congressional recommendation of additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System is not specified in the 1964 Wilderness Act, Senator Murray and Representative Larsen chose to follow a modified version of the public input process outlined in the Act for the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior. Hearings, which are often more of a forum for presentation rather than discussion, were replaced with workshops, a format that encourages participants to engage with proposals. Still, other improvements could have been made to the process: there could have been more lead time before meetings, locations could have been chosen differently, panels could have been better prepared, and the delegation could have returned to the upper Sky Valley for follow-up meetings. These are lessons learned. As Tom Uniack of the Washington Wilderness Coalition said,

[There's] almost a generation of folks in the wilderness community that haven't really had the hands-on experience, the public certainly hasn't been hearing about wilderness proposals since there haven't been any, and our delegation also – the Congressional delegation – isn't in the habit of doing these things (Uniack 2008, personal communication).

While there are some ways that public involvement in Wild Sky can certainly be held up as a model, it is also important to learn from these lessons in order to move towards increased local public involvement.

CHAPTER 3

COMMUNITY

While working to maintain trailheads and facilities in the Skykomish Ranger District, I began to think about the community as stewards. I played the role of student at night, reading international conservation literature, and the role of forest defender by day, picking up after visitors. In Wild Sky, my greatest hope was that – as in the international case studies I was reading – local visitors would become better stewards through community involvement in management decisions and public education. Wilderness, a land use designation thrown into the political arena of citizen action and Congressional representation, was the grounds for studying this possibility. Considering the Sky Valley’s economic, cultural, and political history, what are the prospects for community conservation or co-management?

As expressed in international conservation literature since the early 90s, if local people are not included in management plans for local land, the goals of conservation cannot be achieved (Agrawal 2001; Bonner 1993; Brosius 2005; Western and Wright 1994). Two types of conservation management are particularly important: co-management – land or marine management in which the local people share conservation responsibilities with governments or non-governmental organizations to manage resource use – and community conservation – community management based on encoded traditions and cultural norms which have positive conservation benefit. These governance models are often thought appropriate for Indigenous peoples and local communities, groups who have managed communal lands for untold generations for

farming, grazing, or gathering forest products, and who share social and cultural ties that help in reaching and enforcing management decisions.

In contrast to indigenous settlements, the towns within the Skykomish River Valley are only slightly over 100 years old, having been founded with the construction of the railroad in the late 19th century. However, the people quickly developed a regional connection to the country's communal resources through a history of economic dependency on extractive industries on National Forest lands, hence an interest in management decisions. "By definition, community based conservation appears to require an intact community capable of reflecting collective interests and exercising appropriate authority" (Western and Wright 1994, 389). Although the residents of the Skykomish valley have some qualities that would make community conservation successful, they lack the shared norms and cultural traditions that would lead to successful local conservation management.

International Conservation

Thirty years ago, community conservation began to emerge as an acceptable and desirable means of natural resource conservation. Prior to the 1960s, management of international protected areas generally followed the "Yellowstone Model" (Stevens 1997; Dowie 2005) according to which governments created national parks or wildlife refuges without particular regard for the people who called these lands home. The goals of government conservation were habitat protection and recreation rather than cultural survival, and pushing traditional users outside the boundaries of their traditional lands was often viewed as a means of achieving these goals (Western and Wright 1994, 3).

However, it became increasingly apparent that excluding people from their ancestral lands did not necessarily advance wildlife protection. Severed from traditional land uses and lifestyles, these conservation refugees often met the struggles of living in a new location by “poaching” in the protected area or through retaliatory acts (Bonner 1993). In many cases, the “fortress conservation” model was backfiring, and farsighted conservation programs began to build on local knowledge, traditional practices, and community structure (Western and Wright 1994; Stevens 1997).

The idea driving community conservation is that if stakeholders are involved in resource management decisions and derive benefits from the protected areas, then they will also be interested in ensuring successful implementation of management decisions. “Community-based conservation reverses top-down, center-driven conservation by focusing on the people who bear the costs of conservation. In the broadest sense, then, community-based conservation includes natural resources or biodiversity protection by, for, and with the local community” (Western and Wright 1994, 7). Not only will local communities have a stake in the resources, but also a stake in the benefits of successful conservation. Thus, community involvement can result in meeting the mutual goals of communities, governments, and conservation organizations while decreasing the costs of conservation.

By the early 1990s, high visibility community conservation programs were underway around the world. Programs in Kenya (Western 1994; Bonner 1993), Zimbabwe (Metcalf 1994; Bonner 1993), India (Poffenberger 1994), Peru (Bodmer 1994), Nepal (Wells 1994; Stevens 1997), and Australia (Hill and Press 1994) were being held up as “new paradigm” conservation areas, models built on grassroots organizing,

traditional practices, local benefit, and community responsibility. A year before the publication of *Natural Connections: Perspectives in Community-based Conservation*, The World Conservation Union (IUCN) defined a protected area as, “an area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, managed through legal or other effective means” (Harmon 2007, 1). This definition advanced new paradigm conservation by acknowledging that government control is not the only means of protecting biological, natural, and cultural resources. Further, the IUCN categories of protected areas, published in the same year, included a spectrum of definitions ranging from strict nature reserves and wilderness areas – “natural” areas reserved for scientific study and recreation – to protected landscapes/seascapes and managed resource areas, which include maintenance of culturally shaped landscapes through resource extraction and modification (IUCN 2007). These categories, again, recognize that protecting areas for biodiversity or natural qualities does not necessarily require a prescription for strict nature protection or fortress conservation. Likewise, wilderness preservation does not necessarily mean top-down, government-mandated conservation.

Public Involvement in the United States

While these advances in international regulations, influenced by new paradigm conservation case studies, demonstrate international trends toward community conservation, community involvement in federal land use decisions has increased within the United States as well. Unlike community involvement internationally, which is often a result of grassroots participation made possible by national policy change and catalyzed

by pressure from non-governmental organizations, public involvement in the United States is largely a result of government directives. The Acts governing community involvement in land use decisions were created through grassroots public insistence on having a voice, but with participation codified into law participation is administered by agencies from the top-down.

The most widespread federal mandate for community involvement is the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which outlines a strict process for public input in federal land use changes. This 1969 act stipulates that the public serves as an advisor to federal agency decisions through a series of notices, meetings, and comment periods. This public process is not only for those parties who ask to be included, as agencies must also invite participation from potentially interested parties. Each different written concern or proposed alternative received during public comment periods must be recorded, considered, and responded to.

In an effort to facilitate citizen involvement in the NEPA process, in 2007 The Council on Environmental Quality, the board charged with overseeing NEPA, published *A Citizen's Guide to the NEPA: Having Your Voice Heard*. This booklet describes the Act as follows:

NEPA requires Federal agencies to consider environmental effects that include, among others, impacts on social, cultural, and economic resources, as well as natural resources. Citizens often have valuable information about places and resources that they value and the potential environmental, social, and economic effects that proposed federal actions may have on those places and resources. NEPA's requirements provide you the means to work with the agencies so they can take your information into account (Council on Environmental Quality 2007, 1).

Within this description, the Council recognizes the value of local knowledge about places and resources, much in the same way that traditional ecological knowledge is considered

an important component of international community conservation. However, the public holds a purely advisory role to federal agencies, a voice that must be considered, but not necessarily followed. The same NEPA manual says:

It is important to understand that commenting on a proposal is not a ‘vote’ on whether the proposed action should take place. Nonetheless, the information you provide during the EA [Environmental Assessment] and EIS [Environmental Impact Statement] process can influence the decisionmakers and their final decisions because NEPA does require that federal decisionmakers be informed of the environmental consequences of their decisions (Council on Environmental Quality 2007, 7).

Despite the public’s advisory role, agencies that do not follow the unofficial “majority vote” from the public often find themselves battling the consequences of poor public relations and become entangled in expensive legal disputes. Thus, while NEPA does not require agencies to follow the wishes of the public, it provides a framework for public involvement beyond the role of an advisor.

The Northwest Forest Plan, the Clinton Administration’s famous solution to the problem of the Spotted Owl and the ensuing Timber Wars of the late 1980s and early 1990s, is another case of public involvement even more familiar to Washington State. Offering an opportunity for unprecedented citizen involvement in federal land management decisions (BLM 1999, 4), some of President Bill Clinton’s first days in office were spent in Portland, Oregon, personally meeting with stakeholders and affected citizens. Based on the information and concerns shared at the forest conference, Clinton’s entourage spent the following sixty days working out a set of NEPA-style plans and analyzing the potential outcomes – both environmental and social – for each option (Thomas et. al. 2006; Tuchmann et. al. 1996). Today, whether or not people agree with the administration’s solution, President Clinton’s outreach with the Northwest Forest

Plan is famous in Washington and the state's citizens are grateful for the efforts towards community involvement.

As seen through NEPA and the Northwest Forest Plan, a U.S. movement towards increased public involvement in federal land management decisions is underway, especially in the Pacific Northwest. However, these processes assign the communities affected to an advisory role whereby federal agencies have the option to take public knowledge and concerns into account, but are not legally obligated to act on these concerns. In light of this, the United States government provides two recourses for citizens to ensure that their voice is heard: litigation and elections.

The judicial branch of the government offers an opportunity for litigation, a means of appeal. While this is not always an appropriate option, and is perhaps never desirable, lawsuits have successfully resulted in public involvement. After all, it was Judge Dwyer's court injunction on logging that brought the Timber Wars to a climax and inspired President Clinton's forest conference. Also, a case study included in the NEPA manual for concerned citizens outlines public opposition to the Forest Service's practice of spraying roadside herbicide (Council on Environmental Quality 2007, 24). This practice was challenged in Oregon and Washington courts, then reviewed and changed through the NEPA process: "...litigation gave way to collaboration that yielded a better decision for all parties" (Council on Environmental Quality 2007, 24). In the United States, if citizens or organizations do not feel their voice is being heard and laws have been breached, the judicial system provides an opportunity for people to force federal agencies to hear their arguments. In the case of Wild Sky, the opposition – those people who feel they have not been adequately heard – say that Wild Sky will be held up in the

courts forever (Halley 2008, personal communication). Whether or not the Wild Sky opposition chooses this option, and whether or not there is sufficient legal ground for contesting wilderness designation, the courts remain an important recourse.

The second solution to a lack of public involvement, and the option that pertains most directly to Congressionally designated wilderness, is democracy. It is extremely difficult for wilderness legislation to become law without the support of the affected states' Congressional representatives, who cannot continue to hold office without the support of the majority of their voting constituents. In an article entitled "Participatory Democracy in Natural Resource Management," Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend and Christopher B. Tarnowski distinguish between two polar forms of democracy – delegated democracy, in which elected politicians turn to experts rather than constituents, and participatory democracy, in which citizens directly influence decisions, actions, and rules (Borrini-Feyerabend 2005, 81). The United States government is a combination of the two, wherein elected officials draw on the advice of experts and lobbyists in order to make decisions on behalf of citizens, but officials also have the opportunity to directly seek the opinions of their constituency, both for the sake of improved citizen representation and for improved citizen respect at the polls.

This route of intentional citizen involvement is what Senator Murray and Congressman Larsen chose for Wild Sky. According to those people most closely involved with Wild Sky from its inception, although the Congressional delegation was interested in wilderness preservation in Washington State, a specific proposal location was not agreed upon until there was clear local support for Wild Sky (Owen 2008, personal communication). Then, through early community meetings and negotiations

with stakeholders, Senator Murray and Representative Larsen's offices sought compromise on boundaries and regulations within the proposal. According to Jon Owen, Deputy Campaigns Director for Campaign for America's Wilderness, Wild Sky is "the most exhaustive locally supported wilderness in the country" (Owen 2008, personal communication). And this is not only a comment from wilderness advocates. Mark Rey, USDA's Under Secretary of Natural Resources and the Environment, not a noted wilderness advocate,¹ praised Washington's congressional delegation for their efforts towards successful local participation: "We [the USDA] recognize and commend the Washington delegation for its collaborative approach and local involvement that contributed to bipartisan support for the bill" (Legislative Hearing no. 108-105 2004, 12).

The National Environmental Policy Act, the Northwest Forest Plan, and the Wild Sky proposal process have all been opportunities for the public, including locally affected communities, to serve in an advisory role to federal land management decisions. Agrawal and Gibson write in the introduction to their collection of essays, *Communities and the Environment*, "If communities are involved in conservation, the benefits they receive will create incentives for them to become good stewards of resources (if only the state and the market would get out of the way)" (Agrawal 2001: 7). Benefits from community supported conservation vary from attracting a few more local business patrons to ensuring local jobs and a percentage of entrance fees. Involvement varies in degree from autonomous decision making to government consultation, and varies in scope from public to community. In the end, advisory public participation is not enough

¹ Mark Ray is a former vice president of the American Forest and Paper Association and former executive director for the American Forest Resource Alliance.

to ensure conservation. The following pages examine the degree and scale of participation appropriate for wilderness designations.

One must not confuse public involvement with local involvement. Congressional constituents amount to the “public,” but the towns closest to Wild Sky, while also constituents and members of the public, are “local.” Several members of these communities expressed concern that their elected officials are under no obligation to listen to them because their vote is so small. Skykomish (population 214) is in King County, lumped in with Seattle (563,375). Index (157) is in Snohomish County, combined with Everett (91,488) (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). A Skykomish resident talking about a feeling of disenfranchisement said of Seattle residents, “You have more voting power in your one block than this little town. Everything Skykomish is King County, so it’s Seattle/Bellevue based. So everything they pass, whether you want it or it benefits you or not, you get it. But you have to live with it” (Brown 2008, personal communication). In the case of Wild Sky, although there were opportunities for local involvement through the Index town meeting, there were far more opportunities for public involvement through negotiations with user groups and through workshops in Monroe and Seattle.

Defining Community

Successful community conservation is often based on two strong histories: an established community and a record of past successful conservation. Building upon these histories, a future of continuing effective community conservation is possible. If these conditions exist in the upper Skykomish Valley, then stronger community involvement in

federal lands conservation decisions may lead to better stewardship of common resources – the National Wilderness Preservation System, National Forests, and National Parks.

Agrawal and Gibson's *Communities and Conservation*, which begins by focusing on the place of community in conservation, provides a starting place for examining community. They write that "community" is typically ascribed to groups sharing one or more of three characteristics: "...community as a small spatial unit, as a homogeneous social structure, and as shared norms" (Agrawal and Gibson 2001, 2). Although they later suggest additional characteristics to consider and indeed criticize standard community descriptions, these traditional definitions are nonetheless important, if for no other reason than the idea that perceptions of small size and shared social characteristics would likely lead to self-ascription as community.

The first community characteristic Agrawal and Gibson analyze is "Community as a Small Spatial Unit," noting that a small number of people in a geographically bounded space may develop distinct characteristics (Agrawal and Gibson 2001, 8). For Skykomish and Index – the towns closest to Wild Sky – this characteristic holds true. Skykomish has a land area of .34 square miles, with a population of 214. Index is .25 square miles with a population of 157 (city-data.com, N.d.). Over an hour from Seattle and with little developable land, these upper valley towns have avoided the issues of sprawling residential development seen farther west, where the valley widens in Gold Bar, Sultan, and Monroe. A Washington State Economic Development website boasts of Snohomish County:

Only 20 miles from downtown Seattle - with easy access to Redmond and the Eastside as well. Snohomish County offers unequalled development opportunities, a highly educated workforce, and a unique quality of life...

Providing easy access to the metropolitan area while boasting lower costs and more room to grow. (Snohomish County 2007).

This description does not apply to the upper Sky Valley, where each town has a general store and roadside espresso stand, but the Skykomish Chevron station is the only franchise in the narrow valley. Although the characteristic “small spatial unit” is a subjective term, the towns’ population size and land area would generally be considered small in the United States; in this way it is a “community.”

However, as David Western and R. Michael Wright point out in *Natural Connections*, geographically defining community leads to questions of who and how people are admitted into a community. “Community, in this case, would have to include immigrants, cultures in transition, and those with no ancestral ties to the land or to each other” (Western and Wright 1994, 8). In the case of the Sky Valley, people can gain residence by simply moving into town. Whether or not they are accepted as members of a socially defined community, they instantly become members of the geographically defined community and are entitled to the rights of citizenship – including a vote, the voice of citizen involvement in United States decision-making.

The next condition Agrawal and Gibson discuss is, “Community as a Homogenous Social Structure,” the idea that if more characteristics are held in common – for example occupation, ethnicity, or religion – then there is potential for a stronger sense of community. While the upper Sky Valley towns may have a history of shared characteristics, a rapidly changing economy is also making the social structure less homogenous. The valley towns were built on the promises of thriving railroad and extractive resource industries during the late 19th and mid 20th centuries, but their populations dwindled during the second half of the 20th century. Although a shared

economic base may once have provided a somewhat homogenous social structure, today's population is economically and socially diverse. In Index, people who moved to town thirty years ago for the area's recreational opportunities are still considered newcomers, differentiated from people whose families have historic ties to the railroad or mills (Hunter 2008, personal communication). Statistically, Skykomish is not significantly dependent on its traditional industries. Less than 6% of its population is employed in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining, while the largest sector, 17%, is employed in educational, health, and social services industries. More than a quarter of Index's population is employed in arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). Today there is no common economic background in these towns, and although Index has recently been marketing itself as a center for the arts, this is not a unanimous hope for its future, and does not apply to other towns in the valley.

Agrawal and Gibson's third community characteristic is "Community as Common Interests and Shared Norms," and in terms of conservation, norms that prohibit certain resource degradation actions or lead to cooperative decision making (Agrawal and Gibson 2001, 10). In regards to culturally-based conservation, this is the most important element of community that is missing in the Sky Valley towns. The local history is one of commercial resource extraction, providing lumber and minerals for external markets. Unlike cases of successful international community conservation, there are neither significant culturally inscribed taboos and spiritual norms that would prevent economic exploitation of the area's resources, nor traditions of collaborative conservation management. Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend identifies a lack of shared norms as an instance

where community conservation may not be desirable: “A participatory approach may...not be viable because of local political opposition or sheer lack of norms and institutional support” (Borrini-Feyerabend 1997).

Participation

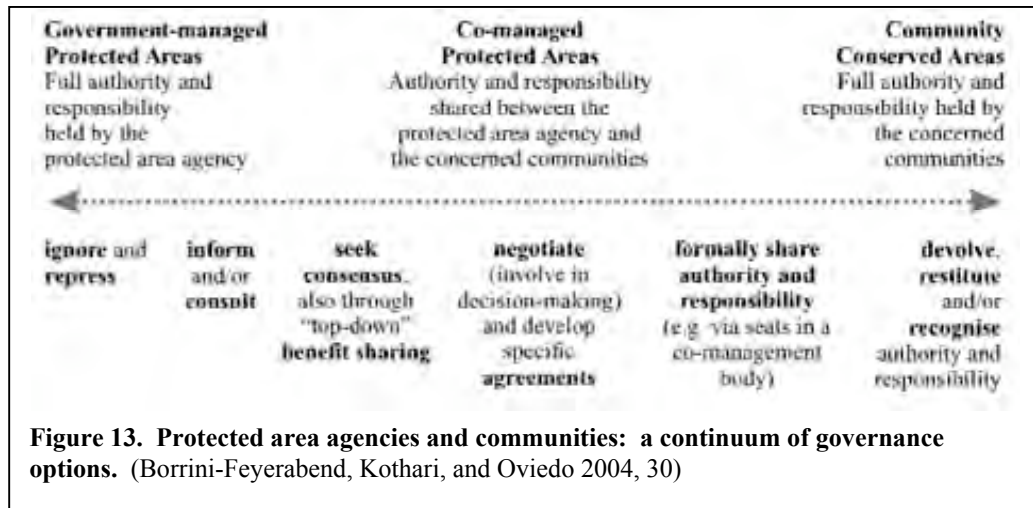
If some elements of community exist, but common conservation interests and shared norms are lacking, then what are the prospects for conservation? Borrini-Feyerabend writes,

The participation of local people provides a unique assurance of the sustainability of the conservation initiative ... [and] most local communities possess greater stability and continuity than national governments. Their investments are made for the next generation rather than for the next election (Borrini-Feyerabend 1997).

Referring to local communities who have shared norms with conservation significance, these are words meant to inspire conservationists to trust in the power of communities to conserve. Although Borrini-Feyerabend’s words might apply to “most local communities,” it should not be readily assumed that the qualities of stability and continuity are synonymous with community. The Sky valley towns exist within a democracy, which should facilitate community involvement, but when citizens can become members of the towns simply by the act of owning property, the communities lack continuity. What’s more, when plummeting populations and economic stresses affect the towns, the communities lack stability.

Although community conservation may not be an appropriate management style for National Forests and wilderness areas, co-management may be useful. A World Commission on Protected Areas’ publication (2004), *Indigenous and Local Communities*

and *Protected Areas*, demonstrates a continuum of governance from strict government control to community conservation:



Along this continuum, “negotiate,” one tool used by Senator Murray and Representative Larsen, falls under co-managed protected areas, but “inform and/or consult,” a second Congressional tool, is more closely related to top-down government managed protected areas. Negotiations, consultations, and informative meetings, as discussed earlier, were effective in garnering agreements of support and neutrality for Wild Sky, and were an effective way of addressing the concerns of user groups. However, the general public and recreational groups the Congressional offices sought were “imagined communities” (Anderson 1983), such as the “snowmobile community” or “seaplane community,” as opposed to geographic communities, and do not have the governance authority necessary for co-management.

Although wilderness advocates celebrate successful public meetings and negotiations, these efforts towards *public* consultation should not detract from involving *local* communities in decision-making processes. The single public meeting in Index is important in that it happened early and was initiated by the community itself. The meeting was a way to raise awareness of the proposal, even in its infant stages, to local

community members and to hear their concerns. However, once the proposal was underway, and more cohesive GIS-based maps and drafted legislation were available, the delegates did not return to the valley. The impetus for the Index town meeting was a proposed declaration of support introduced to the town council by then-Mayor Kem Hunter. Accordingly, the meeting was not intended so much to involve the community in drafting the proposal, but as a way of determining the community's position on Wild Sky. A panel was available to field questions, but not to gather information. Further, because the Index Town Council organized the session as a town meeting, it was not designed as a forum for the people of Skykomish and Baring. Index laid the foundations of local community involvement, but the Congressional delegation did not build upon this by returning with drafts or organizing workshops in the upper Skykomish Valley, as was done in Monroe and Seattle.

Tulalip Tribes

There is one community that is actively moving towards increased collaboration with the Forest Service – the Tulalip Tribes. The treaty of Point Elliott, orchestrated by Governor Stevens and signed in 1855, created the 22,000 acre Tulalip Reservation and joined thirteen tribes, including the Skykomish, Snohomish, Snoqualmie, Skagit, Suiattle, Samish, and Stillaguamish, under one name. “Although Stevens appointed or acknowledged only a few head chiefs for aggregations he called tribes, the documents he prepared named dozens of autonomous groups as parties to the treaties. For some of the named bands, no one signed...” (Harmon 1998, 85). Tribes who did not sign and descendants of members who refused to move to the assigned reservation have

unsuccessfully sought federal tribal recognition (Buchanan 2003). Tulalip are the only federally recognized tribe in the West-Central Cascades and include the legal descendants of the Skykomish people, who had villages near Index and hunted, fished, gathered plants, and visited sacred sites in the surrounding mountains (Cameron and Hubbard 2008, personal communication). In December 2007, under the initiative of Libby Nelson, an employee of the Tulalip Tribes' Natural Resources Department, tribal Chairman Mel Sheldon and Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Supervisor Rob Iwamoto signed a Memorandum of Agreement for increased collaboration and communication with the tribes. The Tribes' press release quotes Sheldon:

The area within Mount Baker and Snoqualmie National Forest are traditional lands where we and our ancestors have been for thousands of years – fishing, hunting, gathering herbs, medicines and food and visiting for ceremonial and spiritual purposes...It is important for us to work with the Forest Service to provide stewardship for these natural resources that serve as a critical link to our past and a means to sustain and nurture our culture in the future... (Tulalip Tribes 2007).

These words establish the historical continuity and community stability needed for successful community collaboration in conservation. Iwamoto's words confirm the possibility of a mutually beneficial relationship:

There are plenty of things that are of interest to both parties...We want to make sure we continue to have clean water, clean air, wildlife, forest products and fisheries. The Forest Service doesn't have the resources we've had in the past so I'd love to see the Tribes participate with us (Tulalip Tribes 2007).

This is a partnership – an agreement for collaboration and communication between the Forest Service and Tulalip Tribes – not co-management (Nelson, L. 2008, personal communication). This memorandum of agreement does not apply to wilderness designation, a Congressional management decision. In the case of Wild Sky, the tribes

were contacted before the 2002 bill was introduced in the Senate. A handout prepared by the Washington Wilderness Coalition (WWC) lists in a timeline of Congressional outreach: “5/21/02 Both offices briefed Snohomish County Executive Bob Drewel and the Tulalip Tribes on proposal” (WWC 2004). Having been briefed, the tribes were included in Wild Sky via a meeting of notification, but the WWC document does not imply consultation. The tribes do support the wilderness, as long as their customary and traditional rights will be honored, but there is nothing in the Wild Sky Wilderness Act explicitly acknowledging tribal rights:

Tulalip Tribes generally support this proposal because of the perceived ecological benefits that will sustain resources of importance to the tribes. Maintaining sufficient access for the pursuit of treaty-reserved resources is always a concern, but so long as this access remains in the wilderness area the Tribes are in favor (Nelson, L. 2008, personal communication, e-mail).

Initiating the memorandum of agreement with the Forest Service, the tribes are clearly interested in increased collaboration in land use decisions within the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forests. Although the Tulalip Tribes have not objected to the Wild Sky legislation, involvement beyond notification could have been extended to this community.

The Community and Conservation

Using the traditional definitions of community – spatially small, homogenous, and shared norms – the upper Skykomish Valley towns can be partially defined as communities. However, even if these communities had more shared authority in resource management decisions, successful community conservation would be unlikely because they lack a history of conservation and culturally-inscribed conservation norms. In the

end, this is essentially Agrawal and Gibson's critique of the traditional community model, which assumes that community characteristics imply conservation characteristics. Consequently, they suggest an actor-based approach, which concedes that most communities are not homogenous. This approach is appropriate for the Sky Valley, where ex-loggers, avid mountain climbers, Forest Service employees, politicians, and farmers each bring different voices to the Wild Sky conversation. The question is whether the political forum of wilderness legislation has provided adequate opportunities for these voices to be heard and incorporated into the Wild Sky Wilderness Act, and who will be defining wilderness for Wild Sky.

CHAPTER 4

WILDERNESS

At the core of the wilderness debate, the many meanings of wilderness are interpreted differently by each actor. Indeed, the Wilderness Act of 1964 creates a strict dichotomy between wilderness and non-wilderness while simultaneously acknowledging that wilderness is a perceptual condition that more realistically exists upon a continuum. This legal definition of wilderness has been discussed extensively elsewhere (Nash 2001, Scott 2004, Callicott and Nelson 1998, Oelschlaeger 1991, Leydet 1963), highlighting that there are multiple interpretations of the Wilderness Act. These varying answers to the question “What is wilderness?” have been the primary obstacle to passage of the Wild Sky Wilderness Act. Because of these contested views, it is necessary to examine the differing ways wilderness has been defined through exploring the authors’ intentions in writing the 1964 Wilderness Act, Congressional intentions in negotiations, how the Act has been applied nationally and locally, and how Wild Sky fits within these precedents.

Beleaguered hope for the passage of the Wild Sky Wilderness Act is heard in a May 2007 *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* article:

The Senate has passed Wild Sky three times in previous years, only to see it fail in the House. But the election in November removed the single-largest barrier to passage when Rep. Richard Pombo, R-Calif., was defeated and when Democrats took control of the House (Pope 2007).

As chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources, Richard Pombo had introduced the 2004 hearing on Wild Sky with these words:

Simply said, a segment of H.R. 822, the Wild Sky Wilderness Act, is not consistent with the Committee’s guidelines or the Wilderness Act. Much of the proposed wilderness area does not meet the actual definition of wilderness. Wilderness, as written in the 1964 Act is “an area where the

earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man” and “an area of undeveloped Federal land containing its primeval character and influence.” Yet, H.R. 822 has miles of roads, culverts, bridges, and dams—this is not wilderness (Legislative Hearing 108-105 2004, 3).

The hearing was then opened to discussion, but with these introductory remarks by the chairman, the Act had little chance for success in 2004. The hearing created an opportunity for selected individuals to voice support or opposition to Wild Sky, but even though politicians and citizens claimed it is wilderness because it “feels” like wilderness, it seems there was little room for discussion.

Pombo’s views on Wild Sky were in line with his political career as a champion of the property-rights movement, a cause he pursued during twelve years as a Republican Congressman from California. Before his failed re-election bid in 2006, *High Country News* published an article lambasting Pombo’s environmental record. “In his 12-plus years in Congress, Pombo has agitated to eviscerate the Endangered Species Act, sell off public lands, and open forests and wilderness areas to more resource extraction” (Weiser 2005, 8). It is no surprise that Pombo opposed Wild Sky. As Chairman and leader of the 2004 hearing, Pombo had the opportunity to challenge every person’s testimony, and his assertion that Wild Sky is not wilderness reigned. However, arguments on both sides of the debate must be considered in light of historical intentions and applications of the Wilderness Act.

In 1963, environmentalists, biologists, artists, essayists, travelers, editors, land use planners, landscape architects, federal secretaries, politicians, pharmacologists, historians, and representatives of other fields joined together for the 8th Wilderness Conference, building upon ongoing discussions and negotiations of wilderness that would eventually be incorporated into the 1964 Wilderness Act. Expounding on wilderness at a

time when wilderness itself was just an idea, not a law, diverse wilderness proponents sought to shape the future of wilderness in the United States. The compiled essays were published as *Tomorrow's Wilderness* (Leydet 1963), a fitting title for a volume containing the words of people whose views shaped the Wilderness Act, signed into law only a year later. Howard Zahniser, chief author of the 1964 Wilderness Act, begins the foreword with the declaration, "*Tomorrow's Wilderness* represents the facts and interpretations that will determine what that wilderness will be" (Zahniser 1963, 23).

Even before these words, the book begins with a series of photographs accompanied by poetic words from David Brower. This montage visually equates the wilderness idea with the Cascade Mountain Range, of which Wild Sky is a part. The expanded frontispiece is a series of fourteen black and white photos of Cascade lakes, mountains, meadows, forests, and fallen logs. Later, the introduction is followed by another fourteen photos, this time an Ansel Adams collection entitled "The North Cascades—Wilderness In Peril," all taken in 1958 near Glacier Peak (the wilderness area directly north of Wild Sky). A single photo follows: a clear-cut with views to the distant snow-capped volcano. Together the photo essays illustrate what stands to be lost if the area is not preserved. The photos' prominent inclusion in *Tomorrow's Wilderness* visually depicts wilderness as the landscape of the North Cascades. As part of this region, Wild Sky embodies this wilderness description.

The authors included in *Tomorrow's Wilderness*, envisioning a national preservation system, place different values on *why* wilderness should be preserved, thus indicating differing opinions on *what* wilderness is. They clearly acknowledge that wilderness defies definition. Stephen Spurr, who sees scientific research as the primary

benefit of wilderness, says, “The wilderness is certainly a pathless and uncultivated tract of land uninhabited by man, but it is difficult to put any precise limits which separate a wilderness from another tract of land which is not one” (Spurr 1963, 60). David Brower, prominent conservationist and executive director of the Sierra Club at the time, writes in the Publisher’s Preface, “There are better definitions for wilderness. I still like this one, mindful though I am of its qualifying adverb: wilderness is a place wherein the flow of life, in its myriad forms, has gone on since the beginning of life, essentially uninterrupted by man and his technology” (Brower 1963, 20). *Essentially* uninterrupted. According to this definition, the place may have had human impacts, either past or present, but the impacts are negligible. This idea is written into the Wilderness Act, which defines wilderness as an area that “*generally* appears to have been affected *primarily* by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work *substantially* unnoticeable” (P.L. 88-577 1964, emphasis added). Still, the qualifying adverbs leave the determination of what is and is not wilderness open to interpretation.

James P. Gilligan, coming from a background in forestry and zoology, had the opportunity to help define wilderness as a consultant to the President’s Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission and as director of the Commission’s study on Wilderness and Recreation from 1961-1962. The report sought to define, inventory, and analyze existing and potential wilderness areas. Acknowledging that definitions are open to interpretation, the Commission defined wilderness as lands providing:

1. primary watershed protection
2. scientific research potentials
3. essential habitat for many species of scarce plants and animals
4. pure air and water
5. reserves of important historical and cultural significance
6. a source of vicarious enjoyment and symbolic meaning to millions

7. relatively unmodified natural landscape containing vast spaciousness, beauty, and variety—which are key conditions for contrast with developed land areas
8. opportunity for isolation, challenge, and refinement of sensory impressions
9. and opportunity for recreation and outdoor activities in superior and distinctive forms of nature study, hiking, climbing, skiing, boating, camping, hunting and fishing (Gilligan 1963, 52).

Listed numerically, the definition appears to be more precise than others, but it includes the same ambiguities of previous efforts. Like many wilderness definitions, the Commission’s interpretation includes scientific and recreational benefits. It also values wilderness as providing natural service functions – protecting water and air. The qualifying adverb – *relatively* unmodified – persists. Interestingly, the definition includes places of important historical and cultural significance, values predicated upon previous human impacts. Further, Gilligan writes, “Our definition also accepted certain developments and present and past commercial uses deviating from the purest concepts of wilderness. Had it not, there would have been little wilderness to inventory” (Gilligan 1963, 52). Later, Gilligan writes that wilderness areas are places that do not contain roads usable by the public. He does not say that roads should not exist in wilderness areas, but rather that they should not be open to the public. Perhaps his intent was that existing roads would only be used for administrative or emergency purposes. If the definition of wilderness used in this early federally commissioned study had been included verbatim in the wilderness act, then the wilderness status of Wild Sky’s contested roads, culverts, bridges, and dams may not have been an issue.

Despite the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission’s broad definition, the Commission only identified 19 million wilderness acres (as compared to the 107,436,608 acres protected as wilderness today). However, the potential for

designating wilderness which included obvious human impacts likely frightened wilderness opponents, since the definition's liberal application could "lock up" more land than "rocks and ice" alone. As passed by Congress, tucked away at the end of the Wilderness Act's definition of wilderness, are the words, "[wilderness] may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value" (P.L. 88-577 1964). Here, briefly mentioned, historical value implies that there may be evidence of past land uses within a designated area.

The Pristine-Humanized Continuum

The debate over the extent of human impact is generally summed up in a debate over "pristine" versus "humanized" landscapes. These two words were never used in the Wilderness Act, yet they appear widely in the wilderness debate. Polar opposites, pristine and humanized lie at opposite ends of a continuum. Thomas Vale attempts to clarify this spectrum with the concepts of intensity, space, and time ambiguity (Vale 2002). These ambiguities raise the questions: To what extent was the land altered? At what distance from an unquestioned human impact might the land be considered less humanized? How much time must pass after a human disturbance before the land begins to recover and regain wilderness qualities?

No one disputes the fact that humans have affected some of the land proposed for Wild Sky. In the Congressional hearings, there is little debate over including a restored fire lookout, which can be rented by the public, and resembles a hotel room on stilts without utilities. The concrete foundation of an ore processing facility, four abandoned dams, seven bridges, twenty-nine miles of roads, and 6,600 acres of previously harvested

land raise more objections (Legislative Hearing 108-105 2004, 37). Yet these precise numbers are not as exact as they seem. Mike Town, a former Sultan resident who personally walked every mile of road and measured each culvert (Town 2008, personal communication), responded to the twenty-nine mile road estimate in the 2004 hearing by saying:

This overstates the effect of the proposed wilderness by not taking into account roads that have already been permanently decommissioned by the Forest Service or otherwise closed by the agency or closed by acts of nature that prevent access. In reality, the Wild Sky Wilderness would impact only about two miles of roads that are currently passable by passenger vehicles (Legislative Hearing 108-105 2004, 40).

Continuing, he claims that the logged acres, harvested for the railroad in the 1920s, are

already recovering naturally from this impact. These stands, left to grow back on their own, have now almost returned to their former glory. Other than the occasional stump, these forests appear quite natural to almost all visitors as they assume the characteristics of true ancient forests (Legislative Hearing 108-105 2004, 40).

From Mike Town's perspective then, these failing roads and past harvests do not compromise Wild Sky's wilderness character. These accounts of the same human influences – measured as twenty-nine miles of roads or two miles and seen as harvested or recovered – represent different perceptions of where Wild Sky lies on the continuum between “pristine” and “humanized,” a judgment predicated on interpretation of intensity, space, and time ambiguities.

In a chapter of *Tomorrow's Wilderness* outlining federal agencies' plans for wilderness, Edward Cliff, chief of the Forest Service, covers the history of USFS wilderness and primitive area regulations, and then announces plans to declassify a Primitive Area because roads, private land, and mining claims detract from the area's wilderness qualities (Cliff 1963). However, North Carolina's Shining Rock Wilderness

illustrates that the Chief's "pristine" rhetoric did not match his own practice. In May of 1964 Chief Cliff administratively designated Shining Rock as a "wild area" just months before the Wilderness Act was passed, knowing that it would then be incorporated into the imminent National Wilderness Preservation System. This decision was made, "notwithstanding the area's history of extensive railroad logging—and a huge logging slash fire—between 1906 and 1926, before it became national forest land" (Scott 2001). Furthermore, there was an extant logging contract within the Wild Area only months before it was designated. The Shining Rock Wild Area proposal (1963), as quoted by Doug Scott, states:

In determining the best and most logical boundaries for the Wild Area, it was necessary to include a portion of the drainage of Ugly Creek covered by a timber sale contract which expires December 20, 1963. About 500 MBF [million board feet] are left to be cut and the operation will be completed this year. The skid trails and log landings will be revegetated and otherwise treated as necessary to hasten natural recovery and prevent vehicular access (in Scott 2001).

Shining Rock's recent history of commercial logging did not prevent the Forest Service from recommending it as a Wild Area on the eve of the 1964 Wilderness Act.

Ben Thompson, representing the National Park Service at the 8th Wilderness Conference, presents a view in *Tomorrow's Wilderness* that parallels the Forest Service's practice of including "non-pristine" lands in at least some wildernesses. Thompson advocates a definition that "is sufficiently flexible to adapt to peculiar local conditions, and...recognizes that natural processes, in time, can restore to wilderness areas previously abused and impaired" (Thompson 1963, 181). His perspective emphasizes time and recovery, unquantifiable qualities, much in the way that some people dismiss

Wild Sky's harvest history by saying, "these forests appear quite natural to almost all visitors."

The idea that a previously exploited area could be restored over time is an important principle of the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act of 1975, which designated sixteen wilderness areas east of the 100th meridian (The Wilderness Society 1999). Although the President's Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission identified six wilderness areas in the Eastern U.S. in 1962, only two of the 54 wilderness areas included in the 1964 Wilderness Act were east of the Mississippi: Great Gulf Wilderness in New Hampshire and Shining Rock Wilderness in North Carolina. Because land use in the more populous Eastern United States had been influenced by an agricultural and industrial history, controversy ensued over whether the East had significant tracts of wilderness.

In the 1970s, the Roadless Area and Review Evaluation (RARE), in which the Forest Service was charged with inventorying potential wilderness, was deemed inadequate in federal courts. This resulted in RARE II, completed in the late 1970s (Scott 2004, 80; Marsh 2007, 93):

[RARE II] included national-forest lands in the eastern United States, a decision that dissolved much of what remained of the purity doctrine. As Assistant Secretary Cutler explained, "A critical reading of the Wilderness Act of 1964 confirms that its framers intended that lands which bear some indications of man may be wilderness" (Marsh 2007, 125).

Meanwhile, in the battle over designating wilderness areas in the Eastern U.S., opponents argued that including previously logged lands in the National Wilderness Preservation System would undermine the integrity of the Wilderness Act. However, this

was not only a debate over the “pristine” definition of wilderness, but also a question of the Forest Service’s realm of control over defining and designating wilderness.

When, in 1971, the Forest Service pronounced, “areas with wilderness characteristics as defined in the Wilderness Act are virtually all in the West,” they were really announcing a new and deliberate misinterpretation of the 1964 Wilderness Act—that no lands with any history of extractive human use, east or west, could qualify as wilderness (Scott 2001).

The agency “invented” wilderness with the “L” and “U” regulations of the 1920s and 30s, but wilderness management decisions were effectively removed from the Forest Service with the Wilderness Act in 1964.

The results of the debate over “pristine” and “humanized” were decided with the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act of 1975, a direct response to the Forest Service supported National Forest Wild Areas Act. This agency supported Act would have created separate criteria for eastern and western wilderness areas, but it failed in the House of Representatives (Marsh 2007, 112). With the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act, even though people argued that these areas lacked the “pristine” conditions intended in the Wilderness Act, administering agencies would be responsible for managing them as wilderness with the idea that they would become more wild over time, and part of – not separate from – the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Before the Act’s passage, Owen T. Jamison, U.S. Forest Service Assistant Director of Recreation, summed up the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act:

If enacted, the Administration proposal would permit inclusion within the Wilderness System of National Forest lands which were once significantly affected by man's works, but within which the imprint of such works have been substantially erased, the appearance has reverted to a natural condition, and opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined recreational experience now exists [sic] (Jamison 1973).

Rather than creating a separate wilderness system in the East, in passing the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act, Congress repudiated the purity theory by 16 new areas to the National Wilderness Preservation System. “Most of these wilderness areas contained land that was previously trammled and impacted by humans. In effect, therefore, Congress rejected the purity definition of wilderness” (Woods 1998, 136). Enacted as an addition to the 1964 Wilderness Act, but directly based upon the concept that time can erase past human impacts, the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act demonstrates that wilderness exists on a fuzzy line somewhere between “pristine” and “humanized.” This was in 1975.

Wilderness in the Pacific Northwest

In the case of Wild Sky, Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) challenged the purity theory with evidence from the East in the 2003 Wild Sky Hearings: “...there are many examples of designated wilderness areas that include roads and culverts, houses and other structures. The recent 2000 Virginia Wilderness Act, passed in July, includes lands harvested as recently as 1945” (Senate Hearing 108-68 2003, 4). Although the Virginia and Eastern Wilderness Areas Acts represent exceptions to a “pristine” interpretation of the Wilderness Act nationally, it is important to also consider how the Wilderness Act has been applied in the Northwest, closer to the proposed Wild Sky Wilderness. In the 2004 hearings, Representative Jay Inslee (D-WA) cited Oregon’s largest wilderness, Eagle Cap, which was previously logged yet nonetheless established in 1964, as proof that the Wilderness Act never intended to protect strictly pristine areas (Legislative Hearing 108-105 2004, 5).

Drawing Lines in the Forest, an exploration of the goals and politics behind Northwest wilderness boundaries, further contests the idea that wilderness must be pristine. In the opening pages, author Kevin Marsh¹ recounts a visit to the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, an area separated from Wild Sky by only a two-lane highway and the several houses that make up the small town of Skykomish, Washington. His week's journey in the wilderness was interrupted by the presence of a roofless cabin along Camp Robber Creek:

I was still alone, but no longer was I isolated from human presence. The forest primeval had become the forest historic, an indisputable reminder that the rugged Cascade Range has been home to many people for a very long time and that our contemporary image of the range as temporary recreational retreat has been valid for only a very limited time" (Marsh 2007, 5).

Despite this encounter with historical land uses, he still had a "wilderness experience."

Indeed, this was a feeling corroborated by others I interviewed:

I've seen some of the old camps...I think it's cool. I love going up and...thinking about the people who used to live there or whatever, and exploring...I've always liked checking out that kind of thing. To me it's like exploring, it's exciting, it's not ruining some wilderness experience (Halley 2008, personal communication).

Likewise, Marsh does not describe the rustic cabin as something that detracts from Alpine Lakes' wilderness status. Rather, he uses it as one of many examples of human structures included in the wilderness land management system.

Two Oregon wilderness proposals – Mount Jefferson and the Three Sisters – failed to include areas clearly affected by humans, but these areas were excluded because of timber's political stronghold and not due to Congressional acceptance of the purity theory (Marsh 2007). In the case of Mount Jefferson Wilderness, the Forest Service

¹ Kevin Marsh was a wilderness ranger in the Skykomish Ranger District for ten years prior to completing his PhD in History at the University of Washington.

authorized road construction and logging contracts in a valley slated for potential wilderness designation (Marsh 2007, 65). With the road constructed and the trees cut before becoming wilderness, the question remained whether the area should remain in the wilderness proposal. The Forest Service argued that roads should not be included in wilderness. Many conservationists, too, were afraid that including roads in wilderness would detract from the sanctity of the national system. However, wilderness advocates were also afraid that the Forest Service's bullying tactics – in constructing a road to avoid wilderness designation – would set a dangerous precedent (Marsh 2007, 73). Conservationists fought to include the roads, an action that would demonstrate an ability to stand strong against the Forest Service, and would allow the roaded area to revert to a more natural state over time.² In the end, however, the contested roads and lowlands were excluded from the Mount Jefferson Wilderness. Marsh argues that this was because of the valley's high timber value, not because of concerns over the area's humanized qualities: "Although a victory for the Forest Service, it was not a congressional endorsement of the agency's purity doctrine" (Marsh 2007, 74). If this is true, then in the case of Mount Jefferson Wilderness, perhaps "purity" won the debate, but not the "purity doctrine."

The Three Sisters Wilderness, also in Oregon, is the site of a decades-long dispute over a forested valley. Named for a local herder, the French Pete valley was used extensively for grazing sheep and was periodically burned in order to improve grazing conditions (Marsh 2007, 102). In 1957, prior to the Wilderness Act, the Forest Service designated surrounding high elevation areas as wilderness, but excluded French Pete,

² Similarly, if Wild Sky becomes wilderness, its former logging and access roads would be decommissioned in order to prevent sedimentation of streams and to create a more "natural" condition.

despite appeals from wilderness advocates. In 1968, the Forest Service announced its intent to harvest timber in the French Pete Creek Valley, refueling an effort to “Save French Pete” that would last another ten years (Marsh 2007, 1968). After a series of failed campaigns to add French Pete to the Three Sisters Wilderness, the valley’s last chance for protection from logging came in the form of an omnibus bill to preserve several contested *de facto* wilderness areas around the country. Despite the hope that a national effort and support from leading politicians could help overcome local disputes, after having passed in the House, the bill was amended in the Senate by Mark Hatfield (R-OR) to exclude French Pete. It was then passed as amended in both the House and the Senate (Marsh 2007, 118). Although this could be seen as Hatfield’s approval of the purity doctrine, this is the same Senator Hatfield who, according to Representative Inslee (D-WA), said, “I am not a lawyer, but the effect of [a purity interpretation] would be to automatically disqualify almost everything. For few, if any, lands in this continent or any other have escaped man’s imprint to some degree” (Legislative Hearing 108-105 2004, 5). Here, Hatfield asserts that the Wilderness Act should not be thought of as including only the purest of lands, but perhaps he found the purity argument convenient when he sought to protect the economic interests of his home state, which was closely tied to the timber industry. French Pete, having been altered by grazing and burning, was not “pure.” But, just as Marsh argued in the case of Mount Jefferson, French Pete’s exclusion from the Three Sisters Wilderness was a victory for the logging industry, not necessarily an indication of Congressional approval of the purity doctrine.

Senator Henry M. Jackson (D-WA) echoed the words of Senator Hatfield:

A serious and fundamental misinterpretation of the Wilderness Act has recently gained some credence, thus creating a real danger to the objective

of securing a truly national wilderness preservation system. It is my hope to correct this false so-called 'purity theory,' which threatens the strength and broad application of the Wilderness Act (in Legislative Hearing 108-105 2004, 5).

In 1957, in response to a Forest Service proposal to designate Glacier Peak Wilderness area (north of Wild Sky), Senator Jackson wrote to the head of the Forest Service requesting that areas below 3,500 feet in elevation – prime timberland – be excluded from the wilderness for economic reasons. However, “Jackson himself would turn from his initial support of the timber industry and become the leading figure in pushing for preservation as he learned more about the issues” (Marsh 2007, 48). Senator Jackson would later write the National Environmental Policy Act, which requires federal agencies to complete comprehensive environmental assessments with public input before carrying out management plans, such as timber contracts. A year after his death in office, one of the several wilderness areas included in the 1984 Washington Wilderness Act was named in his honor: the Henry M. Jackson Wilderness.

The “Henry M.,” as it is affectionately known by locals, offers an incredible wilderness experience, especially since flooding in the fall of 2006 closed several of its access roads, thereby decreasing its use. This wilderness “has outstanding opportunities for solitude,” as prescribed in the Wilderness Act, but the land is not free of human impacts. Benchmark Mountain, likely the most popular destination in the wilderness, offers expansive views across alpine meadows north to Glacier Peak, west to the Monte Cristo massif, south to glacier topped Mounts Daniel and Hinman, and east past the Cascade crest.

The managers of Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest are proud of past land uses here. According to their website, “Cross-Cascade Indian trails paralleled the Little

Wenatchee River and provided routes for later exploring parties such as the 1860 E. F. Cady party for whom Cady Pass and Cady Creek were named” (MBS 2007). A fire tower once sat atop Benchmark, and shards of glass and metal screws still litter the mountaintop, marking its historic location. Years ago the expansive views from Benchmark would have been interrupted by a fence bisecting the ridge (Dwight 2007). Place names and artifacts are evidence of past uses of this mountainous terrain, but signs of human impact, as with many other wilderness areas across the country, are forgiven in this wilderness. What was left out of the Henry M., due to lobbying by timber interests in the 1980s, was the area’s adjacent low-elevation forest – much of the land which is now proposed as Wild Sky.

Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in the Sky Valley

Despite all the controversy over Wild Sky’s past human impacts, little is mentioned about indigenous peoples’ land use, perhaps because there is an assumption that their uses were minimally invasive and that the passage of time has erased past influences on the landscape. Before the settler era, 35,000 to 45,000 people lived on the western slopes of the Cascades in what is now Oregon and Washington, practicing large scale burning in some valleys, but the extent of these effects is unclear (Whitlock 2002; Krech 2006). The lush forests and fecund streams provided the opportunity for a relatively stationary lifestyle without the need for agriculture, but fire was likely used as a tool to promote the growth of certain vegetation or to create meadows that attracted animals. Resource use was territorially apportioned and managed: “most Indians were not farmers, but Indian tribes controlled particular zones of land, within which tribe

members had rights to use resources to the exclusion of members of other tribes” (Banner 2007, 234). As mandated by the Point Elliot Treaty, thirteen tribes, including the Skykomish and Snohomish whose homeland was the mountains and rivers of the Sky Valley, were forced out of these zones and onto the coastal Tulalip Reservation in 1855.

The first non-indigenous people to enter the region were European explorers, charting the coast in the late 16th century and trading with indigenous peoples. Fur traders entered the Cascades in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, affecting the landscape by significantly altering wildlife populations. The first permanent settlers arrived in early decades of the 1800’s, a time when agriculture was equated with civilization. For these immigrants, the land was *terra nullius*, especially since, politically, the Oregon territory was no-man’s-land until 1846, when Britain and the U.S. agreed to an international boundary (Banner 2007). After the Oregon Donation Act of 1850, which promised each homesteader 320 acres, American settlers scattered across the landscape, making way for “civilization” by clearing land and building towns. Today, signs of early settlement can be seen in some of the small dams and foundations within Wild Sky.

The settling of the Pacific Northwest was emblematic of the growing age of American consumerism. The Chicago-based magazine *Northwestern Lumberman* stated in 1880:

Every new settler upon the fertile prairies means one more added to the vast army of lumber consumers, one more new house to be built, one more barn, one more 40 acres of land to be fenced, one more or perhaps a dozen corn cribs needed. But it means more; it means an extension of railroad lines with the vast consumption of lumber consequent thereupon; it means an additional incentive to other projected settlers to take farms near the first comer; it means churches, school houses and stores, sidewalks, paved streets and manufacturers, and it means new channels of enterprise

constantly opening which add to the yearly increasing demand for lumber (in Cronon 1991, 153).

Indeed, enormous amounts of wood were needed to construct the rail-lines that began to cross the country. Portions of Wild Sky were logged for the railroad in the 1920s (Senate Hearing no. 108-68 2003, 19); Wild Sky did not escape the demand for lumber.

Defining Wilderness

Now the question remains: What is wilderness? The totality of this discussion presented at the 8th Wilderness Conference and recorded in *Tomorrow's Wilderness*, along with other debates across the country, resulted in the 1964 Wilderness Act. In this Act, the first definition states that wilderness is, “an area where the earth and its community of life are *untrammelled* by man” (P.L. 88-577 1964, emphasis added). This archaic word – trammel – signifies controls that limit freedom, meaning that its opposite – untrammelled – signifies a lack of human control, that wilderness is unrestrained, or free. Often confused with “trampled,” untrammelled does not mean that the ground has not been walked upon. Although appearing “uncontrolled” and wild now, land within wilderness boundaries may still retain signs of past human trammels. Thus, it remains unclear where wilderness lies on the continuum of control.

In Pacific Northwest forests, where an abundance of rainfall regularly washes out roads, and an abundance of vegetation regularly reclaims man-made trails, nature is especially resistant to human trammels, despite thousands of years of human use. Indeed, the Cascades have been home to indigenous peoples for millennia, who quite possibly burned the forests and altered large tracts of vegetation. Fur traders crisscrossed the mountains, setting traps and affecting wildlife populations. Settlers brought disease,

agriculture, and industry, infecting indigenous peoples and affecting the landscape. The Great Northern Railroad brought work crews and took the most valuable trees for ties. The Forest Service brought fire lookouts, logging roads, trails, and recreation seekers. All of these impacts have been substantial and noticeable in their time. However, the prolific forests of Wild Sky are adept at covering up old uses of the landscape. Is “the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable” (Public Law 88-577 1964) after years of growth and weathering? Do some of these remnants of past human activities have “historical value”? In light of the history of precedents across the country and examples of wilderness designations in previously logged, roaded, and settled areas, does it matter if potential wilderness areas in the Pacific Northwest show evidence of historical human impact? The answers to these questions depend on personal interpretation and expectations for wilderness and not on a clear legal definition enshrined in the Wilderness Act.

The Wilderness Act attempted to clearly define wilderness in order to establish a basis for the National Wilderness Preservation System, but the bill is a political compromise, having taken eight years of negotiation to get through Congress (Scott 2004, 50; Nash 2001). As such, it contains both politically-motivated ambiguities and ambiguities inherent in subjective personal experiences and evaluations of what constitutes wilderness. It is not valid to select some words from the language of the act – “untrammled” or “undeveloped” – apply those words to Wild Sky, and argue that it is unfit for wilderness designation. One must also look at national and regional precedents in order to understand previous interpretations and reinterpretations of the Wilderness Act’s definition. The Wilderness Act does not use the words “pristine” or “humanized,”

but somewhere between these opposing concepts exists what has come to be considered “wilderness” in the National Preservation System – complete with qualifying adverbs – a land that “generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable.” In the end, personal and political interpretations of these adverbs, as contested within the Congressional political process, will determine whether Wild Sky will be designated as wilderness.

CHAPTER 5

WHY WILD SKY?

Wild Sky was born from local support and grew with federal political support. In the late 1990s, when reactions to the Salvage Logging Rider helped launch a renewed Washington wilderness campaign, the “state’s first wilderness since 1984” could have been designated in many parts of Washington. Throughout the state, citizens made local proposals, hoping to save a piece of the landscape dear to their heart. Strategy was discussed, including whether to combine several areas throughout the state in one wilderness package, or whether it would be better to focus on a single area (Uniack 2008, personal communication). Of the several citizen ideas, a single push from Index – support for wilderness from then-Mayor Kem Hunter – provided the impetus for politicians to select Wild Sky (Owen 2008, personal communication). Kem Hunter recently reflected on the past and future of Index:

If you look at Index’s past – it was a logging town, it was a mining town, to some extent it was a bit of a railroad town – and none of those have any future for Index. Index doesn’t have any employment base in the way of significant retail or services, so it really needs an identity for the future to survive. And I personally feel, and I’ve felt all along, that its best identity lies in a jumping off place to enjoy outdoor recreation (Hunter 2008, personal communication).

This economically-minded sentiment, based in an appreciation for the area’s scenic qualities, was perceived as early local support, and the campaign for Washington’s next wilderness shifted to rally around Wild Sky.

Indeed, the answer to “Why Wild Sky?” is simple: public support. The arguments that would propel the proposal forward – ecology, economics, and recreation – were secondary to the importance of public backing. Contrary to the latest trends in gap

analysis, representational conservation, and biological corridors, which are guided by science, Wild Sky was envisioned for political, economic, and social reasons, and a scientific case was made later.

Time and time again, Wild Sky proponents talk about the merits of the low elevation forests that the proposal would protect. Senator Murray (D-WA) said at the 2003 hearing, a

...driving purpose behind the bill is the inclusion of low elevation lands in Washington State wilderness. Lowland areas in some of our current wilderness in the Cascades make up only around 6 percent of the designated lands. This proposal is made up of around 30 percent lowland areas [below 3,000 feet] (Senate Hearing no. 108-68 2003, 5).

In the spirit of representational conservation, Wild Sky houses valuable forested valleys not represented as wilderness elsewhere in the state.

In previous decades, the “value” behind these forests would have been counted in millions of board feet. RARE II identified the lands in the core of Wild Sky as potential wilderness in the late 1970s (figure 14), several years before the 1984 Washington State Wilderness Act. This Act, which designated almost 850,000 acres of wilderness in Washington, was stimulated by a timber industry campaign for “release language,” which would prioritize logging in designated areas. The industry did not get the release language it hoped for. However, in exchange for supporting the Washington Wilderness Act, it did get a promise that Congress would not consider any additional Washington wilderness areas for the next fifteen years. Additionally, the Washington State Wilderness Act begins with “findings” that distinguish between lands valued for wilderness and lands that could qualify as wilderness, but would not be designated as such because they were considered to be more valuable for other uses:

Sec. 2(a) The Congress finds that—...

(2) the Department of Agriculture's second roadless area review and evaluation (RARE II) of National Forest System lands in the State of Washington and the related congressional review of such lands have identified areas which, on the basis of their landform, ecosystem, associated wildlife, and location, will help to fulfill the National Forest System's share of a quality National Wilderness Preservation System; and

(3) the Department of Agriculture's second roadless area review and evaluation of National Forest System lands in the State of Washington and the related congressional review of such lands have also identified areas which do not possess outstanding wilderness attributes or which possess outstanding energy, mineral, timber, grazing, dispersed recreation and other values and which should not now be designated as components of the National Wilderness Preservation System but should be available for nonwilderness multiple uses under the land management planning process and other applicable laws (P.L. 98-339 1984).

Although most of Wild Sky's forested valleys were identified as roadless areas, and may have been suitable for wilderness designation, they possessed outstanding timber values and were therefore left out of the Washington State Wilderness Act.

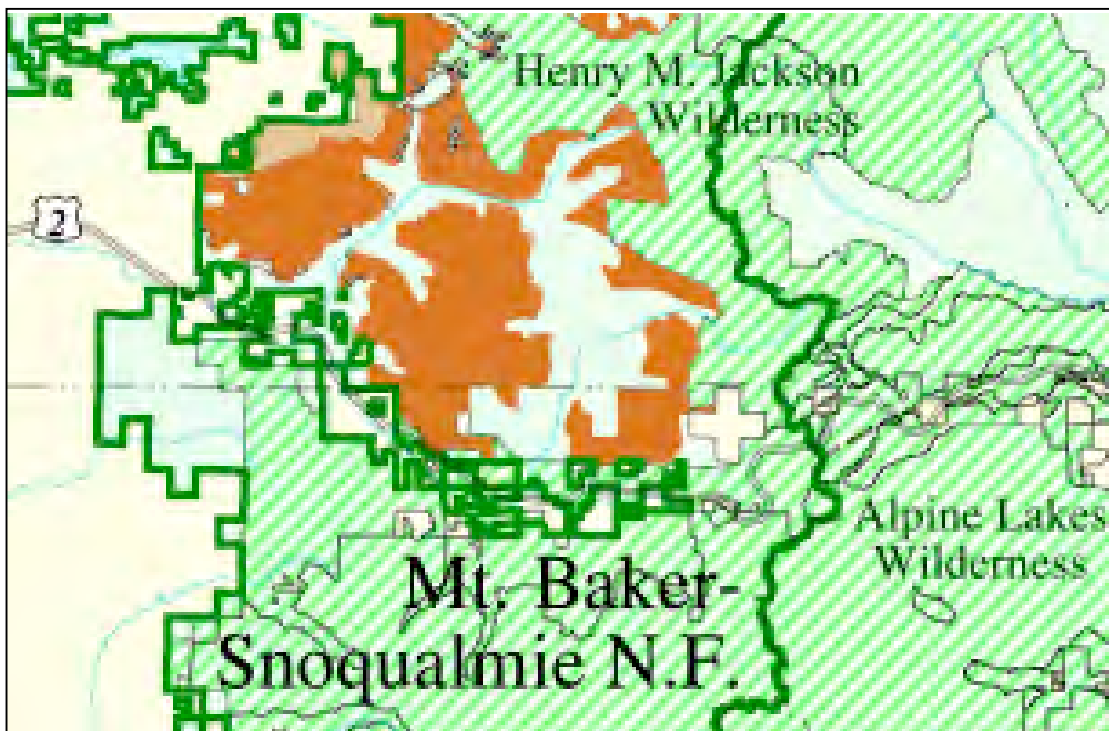


Figure 14. Portion of Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Inventoried Roadless Areas showing the Wild Sky area in brown. (MBS 2000)

Since 1984, the economic and political climate has changed. The timber industry is not a major local employer. This is partially due to the “Timber Wars,” the conflict between the timber industry and environmentalists that brought logging on federal lands to a halt in the early 1990s, and partially due to the Northwest Forest Plan, offered as a solution to the Timber Wars. Because the Plan identified only a small percentage of land in the Skykomish Ranger District as “matrix lands,” land available for timber harvest, the District cannot supply steady jobs for local loggers. Further, logging companies don’t operate the way they used to. The lumber mills in Alpine, Scenic, Skykomish, Baring, and Index have closed; it’s cheaper to send the logs to be processed in larger mills down valley. Today, work in the timber industry is not constant enough to employ large numbers of local workers; instead logging companies move from job to job with a set crew, unlikely to hire local people for local jobs (Brown 2008, personal communication). Time and again, I heard people say that railroad and logging are part of the Sky Valley’s past, but its future is in recreation and tourism (Hunter 2008, personal communication; Albert 2008, personal communication; Wagoner et.al. 2005). Even people like Charlie Brown, whose family moved to Baring in 1951 for the logging opportunities, and who worked in the industry himself for many years, are resigned to seeing logging as local history (Brown, personal communication).

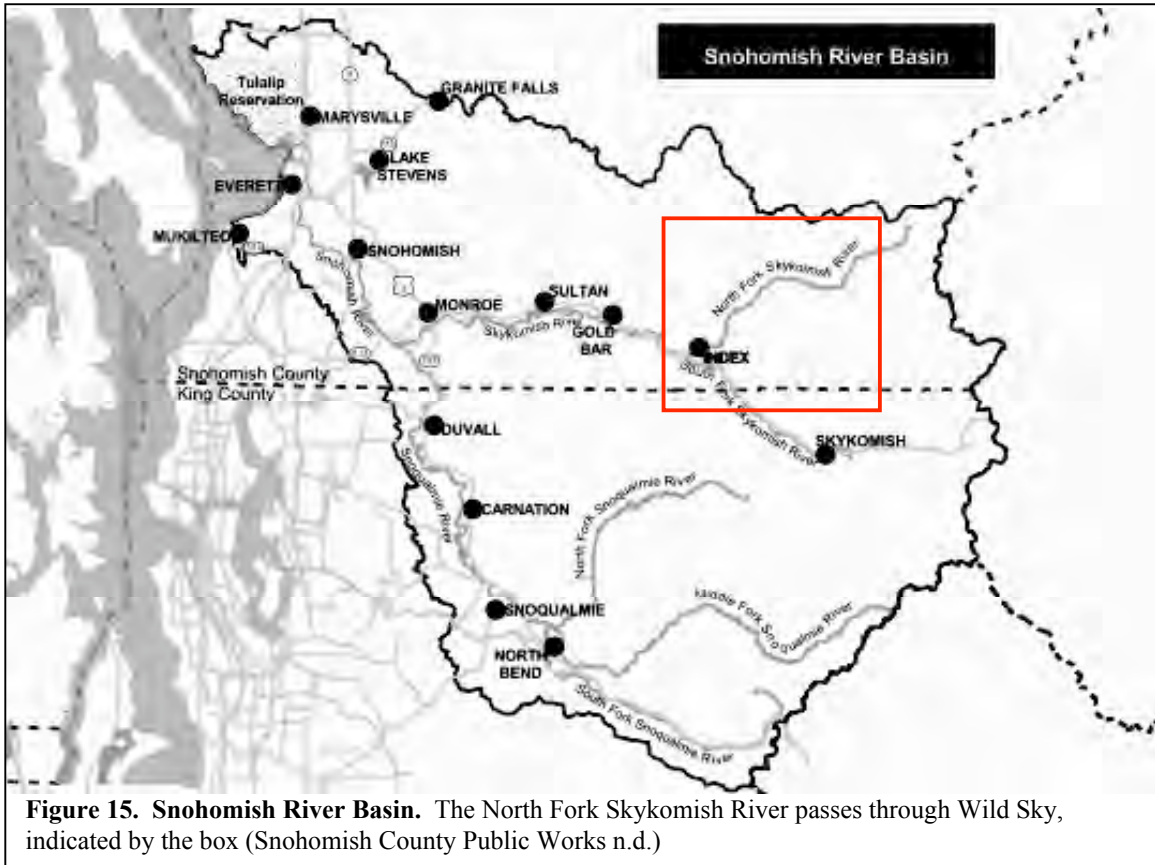
Today, the “value” of the forested valleys is ecological and recreational, measured in water quality, endangered species habitat, and experiences on the trail. The argument that lowland forests are underrepresented in Washington’s wilderness network is one of “representational conservation,” an approach that strives to protect some of every type of

ecosystem. However, the Wild Sky proposal was shaped before it was clear what gap it would fill, making it a case of “opportunistic conservation” driven by politics (Adams 2006). It does seem that Wild Sky’s lowlands would fill a gap in western Cascade wilderness preservation, but its boundaries may have been drawn differently if science were its guiding principle rather than politics.

Habitat Protection

Wild Sky’s shaded streams provide critical habitat for salmon species listed on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Threatened and Endangered Species System. As Congressional Representative Jay Inslee (D-WA) said in a 2004 legislative hearing, “...low-level timber provides shade, filtration of water and help with the salmon that are so needy, and these are the salmon that get higher in the Cascades than any other salmon run probably in the State of Washington” (Legislative Hearing 108-105 2004, 4). These comments echo those of Mark Heckert, President of the sportsmen’s organization Washington Wildlife Federation, who identifies the North Fork of the Skykomish River and its tributaries as, “home to one of the best remaining strongholds of anadromous and freshwater fish in the Puget Sound region” (Senate Hearing 108-58 2003, 24). Downstream from Wild Sky, 60% of the riverbanks of the Snoqualmie and Snohomish Rivers have no riparian buffer and 30% of the tributaries have been channelized (King County, 2001), characteristics that affect natural salmon habitat. In the Snohomish River watershed (Figure 15), of which the Skykomish River is a part, nine salmonid species use the rivers for spawning and rearing, producing 25-50% of coho salmon in Puget Sound. The Skykomish and Snoqualmie Chinook salmon populations are listed as threatened,

and the North Fork Skykomish, Troublesome Creek, Salmon Creek, and South Fork Skykomish bull trout populations are each estimated to be less than 100 individuals (Snohomish County Public Works N.d.). Wild Sky offers an opportunity to ensure long-term protection of these anadromous species.



Further protecting Washington’s fisheries, the Wild Sky Wilderness Act mandates that former roads included within the wilderness boundaries be decommissioned, which would prevent stream sedimentation. This process involves re-grading and re-vegetating abandoned roadbeds in order to create more “natural” conditions. A reduction in logging in National Forests, which once provided revenue used to maintain the extensive system of dirt roads, has led to miles of un-maintained travelways (Charnley 2006). Forests can protect against landslides and sedimentation, but “forest disturbance or even poorly

planned or constructed roads and recreational infrastructure can significantly reduce the forest's protective function" (Hamilton and Cassells 2003, 60). Without funds for maintenance, annual flooding easily overwhelms old culverts and failing drainage systems, carrying gravel sediment into streambeds and altering waterways. By converting failing roadways to trails, increased vegetation would decrease sedimentation. Thus, biologists contend that wilderness protection for Wild Sky and its contingent road decommissioning would help to mitigate the affects of downstream habitat degradation.

Although wilderness protection may provide habitat for several federally listed species, salmon are discussed in Wild Sky literature more than any other species. Considering past decades of economic turmoil and political polarization over the spotted owl, the poster child blamed for killing the logging industry (Dietrich 1992), salmon protection doesn't arouse quite such strong feelings. However, the salmon's imagery as a regional symbol (Anderson 1994) may have the power to rally support for habitat protection. The salmon – or at least the likeness of a fish people generally assume to be a salmon – makes its way onto bus-side advertisements, public artwork, Tulalip Tribes' letter head, and even the seal of the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. This icon's population has plummeted since European settlers introduced dams, over-fished the waters, and deforested riversides (Egan 1990). In Wild Sky is an opportunity to protect the spawning grounds of the Pacific Northwest's cultural symbol.

Salmon are not the only threatened or endangered species native to Wild Sky. Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest contains eight federally listed threatened species, including the Northern spotted owl and grizzly bear (MBS National Forest 2006). Wild Sky is within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife North Cascades Grizzly Bear

Recovery Area, where the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that there is only a “remnant” population of fewer than 20 individuals, but the ecosystem is sufficient to maintain and recover a viable population (U.S. Fish and Wildlife 2004). Specific threats to the grizzly in the North Cascades Recovery Area “include incomplete habitat protection measures (motorized access management)...” (US Fish and Wildlife 2007). With this consideration, it would seem that a non-motorized area, such as wilderness, would offer better grizzly habitat protection than is currently afforded.



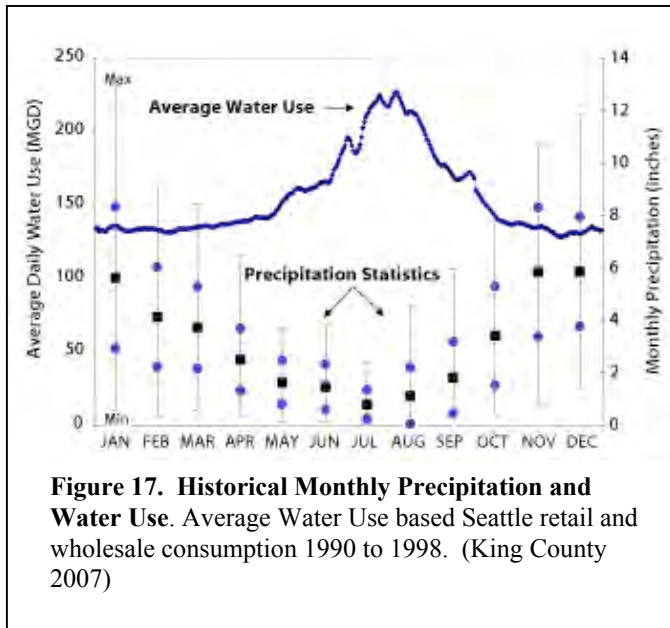
Salmon and grizzly bear protection are important to the Wild Sky conservation strategy because they are both “keystone” species, the basis for conservation’s latest theory – rewilding. Emerging from both representational conservation and island biogeography, rewilding emphasizes large-scale conservation areas that protect a variety of connected ecosystems (Noss and Soule 1998). Large predators and anadromous fish,

both of which generally have far-reaching habitat needs and clearly demonstrate the interconnectedness of ecosystems, serve as umbrella species in the conservation equation. Thus, through striving to protect the varied habitats of grizzlies and salmon, a menagerie of other species and ecosystems will be protected as well.

Flood Mitigation

Flooding is a very real issue for Sky Valley towns, where houses and businesses were built at the valley bottom, along the railroad, making residents vulnerable to seasonal flooding of the Skykomish River. Wilderness protection could potentially provide long-term natural services functions, including flood mitigation. Indeed, studies show that, “Protected forested watersheds do have a beneficial effect to local communities or settlements close to the area in question. They are hydrologically the safest land cover and land use that exists...” (Hamilton and Cassells 2003, 60). For a town like Index that is high in the watershed, continued forest protection through Wild Sky may help decrease flooding and delay peak flows. However, this protection does not necessarily apply farther downstream, where the broader watershed is affected by a variety of land uses, soil depth, and channelization.

Considering riverside property owners in Sultan and Monroe, Representative Rick Larsen (D-WA) argues that salmon protection can be synonymous with human benefits, since wilderness designation and corresponding watershed protection could reduce pressures on private landowners and farmers to protect the salmon runs downstream (Senate Hearing 108-58 2003). This is based on the idea that natural water storage upstream and shading snow pack will result in a more constant water supply throughout



the summer, when usage is at its peak (Figure 17). This is especially important with the endangered or threatened listing of salmon species, since counties and utilities must now collaborate to ensure sufficient instream flows for these species, often through conservation (King County 2007). Thus, if upstream

forests can help to naturally regulate water levels downstream, then users downstream – including farmers – would be responsible for less self-regulation and conservation.

Conversely, John Postema, who owns a local plant nursery, presents a different perspective. He was a member of the Snohomish County Groundwater Committee for four years, a group that decided water storage would be the best solution to water allocation and flood control problems. According to Postema, building a dam would limit seasonal flooding and decrease salmon habitat destruction caused by high sediment levels (Senate Hearing 108-58 2003). This pro-dam perspective seems to be a reflection of regional water study emphases. Washington’s Department of Natural Resources’ website notes that there is detailed flood hazard information regarding the Snohomish/Skykomish watershed, but there is no comprehensive assessment plan for habitat restoration needs within the watershed (King County 2001). The different policies advocated by Representative Larsen and John Postema both profess to benefit people downstream while protecting salmon habitat, but the role that Wild Sky would

play in these scenarios – either as a form of natural ecosystem protection or as the site of a future flood control dam – result in entirely different views of Wild Sky Wilderness.

Economic Benefits

Besides the regional benefits of ecological and watershed protection, the people living in the Skykomish Valley have been told that the new wilderness area will boost their economy. This has been a pro-wilderness argument since the 1920s:

Wilderness advocates reminded policymakers that intact forests were not ‘idle’ but rather provided many non-market functions and values. They also pointed to the economic benefits associated with tourism, arguing that scenic vistas, campgrounds, and outdoor recreation were not only beneficial for the human body and spirit but were good for business, too (Hirt 1994, xxv).

However, it should be noted that the Wild Sky area is not particularly known for its destinations. According to Gary Paull, Wilderness and Trail Program Coordinator for the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest:

The amount of use that occurs in [the Wild Sky] area, in the course of a year you can basically count on one hand, except for the Blanca Lake trail. So most of the destinations that people are going to on the trail system right now, they’re not in Wild Sky, they’re in Henry M. Jackson. You’re going to pass through Wild Sky to get to Blanca Lake, or you’re going to pass through Wild Sky to get to W. Cady Ridge or Dishpan Gap.

This is echoed by business owners up and down the valley. Of those I spoke with, none think the new wilderness would significantly affect their business, either positively or negatively. When I asked Gary Paull if wilderness designation would affect the number of visitors, he said:

I don’t see this big rush of people to go up to Ragged Ridge. There’s no trail there, and it’s really steep, and it’s brushy. So they’re not going to go there. There might be some increase, like Eagle Lake, because that’s

gotten a lot of publicity. And people know you can get there from Eagle Creek now.

The debate over Wild Sky (along with Fall 2006 flooding that cut off access to popular hiking trails elsewhere in the district) has resulted in increased use of some lesser-known trails that have been featured in newspaper articles and advocacy organization newsletters. This free publicity and the visibility that comes from attaching the word “wilderness” to an area may indeed draw new visitors to the upper Sky Valley, a potential boon to local businesses.

“Wild Skykomish Country and Washington State Economics of Wilderness,” an article from the Wild Washington website, suggests that wilderness will draw high tech businesses to the region (Wild Skykomish). This idea is also advanced in a *Society and Natural Resources* article that describes the “new west”:

...resource extraction industries are being replaced not by other primary-sector activities but with tertiary-sector industries that build on the aesthetic and recreational amenities of particular western places... Facilitated by advances in communications, transportation, and information technologies, as well as by neo-liberal trade policies from the late 1980s, firms have become increasingly footloose and decentralized. Increasingly, many industries have sought out new production locations based not only on labor costs, material inputs, and regulatory environments, but also on quality of life and other place-based amenities” (Wilson 2006, 54).

Wild Sky, along with the Alpine Lakes and Henry M. wilderness areas, may make the Seattle suburbs attractive to new technology industries, which would create employment for a skilled labor force and provide correlated service jobs.¹ However, while there may be more job opportunities available, they will not necessarily provide the remuneration gained in the timber industry. In Oregon, of the people displaced from the timber

¹ As of 2006, Microsoft employed over 33,000 people in the Puget Sound area.

industry the majority “found jobs in the service and trade sectors at earnings well below the median level of workers who remained in wood products...” (Helvoigt, Adams, and Ayre 2003, 45). Although Wild Sky’s proponents hope that it will have positive benefits on the economy, it is unclear what the economic outcome will be.

Whatever Wild Sky’s effect on the economy, it may prove true that a wilderness can draw people into local communities. In Washington, 2.5 million residents live within 90 minutes of the proposed wilderness. This enhances Wild Sky’s wilderness value. In “Wilderness as a Form of Land Use,” Leopold partially gauged wilderness’s usefulness by its proximity to urban centers, which makes a wilderness experience accessible to a larger number of people with “a great desire but a small purse and a short vacation” (Leopold 1925, 402). According to the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie 2006 Monitoring Report, their National Forest receives more wilderness visits than any other Forest in the United States, a number likely to increase if, as the report predicts, all types of recreation visits increase by at least 50 percent in the next twenty to twenty-five years (MBS National Forest, 2006). Further, the report states, “Seattle residents generally take part in nature-based tourism activities at the [*sic*] higher rate relative to other Western metropolitan areas. The activities with exceptionally high participation rates compared to Western U.S. averages are: primitive camping, coldwater fishing, backpacking, rafting, canoeing, developed camping and cross-country skiing” (MBS National Forest 2006, 18). Aside from developed camping, all these activities will be allowed in the new wilderness area. If Wild Sky has the power to draw more visitors into the wilderness, proponents argue, the local economy will benefit from more gas station stops, restaurant visits, convenience-store needs, and guide services.

However, opponents contend that wilderness visitors are less likely to spend money in these places than other users, since an attitude of self-sufficiency leads wilderness seekers to spend less money locally. This has been observed by Charlie Brown, co-owner of Skykomish's Whistling Post Tavern:

One thing is, a wilderness area doesn't draw things to town. The Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area up there, we do so little business by the people who go up there. If you think about it, you walk all the way into the Necklace Valley and then you walk out four days later, you're ready to go home, get a shower, get cleaned up. They don't really use us for that. They're pretty self-contained (Brown 2008, personal communication).

This is debatable. The 2001 National Visitor Use Monitoring Results for Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest report significantly higher gas and restaurant expenditures for wilderness visitors, but higher lodging expenditures for non-wilderness visitors (MBS 2001). However, this report is difficult to assess, since the data collection methods are varied and some statistics, such as wilderness users reporting an average per-trip expenditure of \$148.56 on gasoline and oil within fifty miles of the National Forest, seem impossible.

Because U.S. Route 2 is not only an access route to the Skykomish Ranger District but also a throughway to recreation on the "sunnyside" of the Cascades, even if local businesses experience a weekend or seasonal increase, it is difficult to calculate how much of this increase is from local visits versus people passing through. Further, it is difficult to know how many of the people who recreate locally recreate in wilderness. The Visitor Use Monitoring Results attempt to quantify expenditures for all of Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, but results vary between districts.

Whatever the economic or ecological outcomes of Wild Sky's wilderness designation, these arguments build upon extant public hopes for an economically and

environmentally sound future. Politically, wilderness proposals are risky, and Washington's Congressional Representatives wanted to feel comfortable that a majority of the area's neighbors would support the state's next wilderness. Thus, Wild Sky would not have been a possibility without the perception of early local support, and potential scientific and economic benefits have provided compelling arguments for garnering further public support. Trends in conservation theory have been moving towards selective conservation, identifying conservation corridors and gaps in species representation, and then pursuing preservation options in those areas, often through arrangements with private landowners or action by different scales of government. However, wilderness conservation is unique in that it requires political action at the Congressional level. This does not mean that the science is left behind when selecting wilderness proposals, but rather that it is secondary to political viability.

CHAPTER 6

THE OPPOSITION

“There was no process.” This is the lament of people who feel their voices were not considered during the creation of the Wild Sky proposal. It is not that there was no process – clearly there was a protracted process – but rather, they do not feel the process adequately met their needs. Although Senator Murray and Representative Larsen may have wholeheartedly established opportunities for public input, perhaps to more of an extent than any other recent addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System (Owen 2008, personal communication), there are still people who feel they have not been heard.

There are two types of concerns with Wild Sky. First, there are issues with boundaries and regulations, which can often be resolved through negotiation and compromise. Secondly, there are issues rooted in personal values and ideology, which cannot be compromised. Because it is difficult to address ideology through the tools of politics – compromise and negotiation – people with firm ideological views will often feel that they were not heard. Land use decisions, especially for federal lands built upon a policy of “multiple use,” will never have unanimous citizen approval. There are simply too many interests and non-compatible uses for all parties to be satisfied. However, through public involvement, Congress can make locally informed decisions while striving to represent the majority of their constituents and key interest groups.

Negotiation and Compromise

Initial concerns about Wild Sky, evident in the negotiated boundaries and regulations, were problems with location. Signifying a turn from the days when the timber industry had a strong voice in wilderness negotiations, today's strongest voices have been from motorized recreation organizations.

What many people might consider an obscure activity, float plane recreation, has had a steady voice in defining the Wild Sky Wilderness Act. Lake Isabel, a favorite landing site for float plane pilots, has been included within the proposed wilderness boundaries of every Wild Sky proposal, but so too has a specific exception been made for the use of float planes on the lake. In some ways, this is an easy compromise, since the 1964 Wilderness Act states under a "Special Provisions" section, "Within wilderness areas...the use of aircraft or motorboats, where these uses have already become established, may be permitted to continue subject to such restrictions as the Secretary of Agriculture deems desirable" (The Wilderness Society 2004, 16). However, float plane access can be controversial. Just across Route 2 from Wild Sky, floatplane pilots once enjoyed landing on the many scenic waterways within Alpine Lakes, but they were denied this opportunity shortly after the area was designated as wilderness in 1976.

Surely visitors who walk to Isabel's backcountry lake shores might be jostled by the whirl of engines within an otherwise motor-less solitude, but this disruption is a piece of the price paid to garner support for the bill. Michael Volk wrote to Congress in May 2003 stating that, "the Seaplane Pilots Association endorses the legislation as introduced" and agreed that the U.S. Department of Agriculture may in the future limit early morning takeoffs, the number of planes allowed at one time, or the number of times one plane can

land in a day (Senate Hearing 108-58 2003, 53). For the authors of Wild Sky, the exception at Lake Isabel bolsters the image that they are working to accommodate as many interests as possible; for float plane pilots, solitude, fishing, and family picnics will continue to be only a short flight away.

One of many compromises heralded as proof of public involvement, the float plane negotiation seems to be one of the only issues that Wild Sky's proponents and opponents can agree upon: floatplanes don't belong in wilderness. Strict wilderness advocates are opposed to this exception and many of Wild Sky's staunchest opponents – other motorized users – complain of the preferential treatment for float plane pilots. Mark Halley, 4x4 enthusiast, characterized it this way, “It just seems, they're making all kinds of concessions to certain users, like float planes can go up to Lake Isabel. And to me it's just rich people with money who can have some pull in the process” (Halley 2008, personal communication). Various forms of this sentiment – that the urban elite is heard and the rural locals are not – were repeated throughout my interviews.

Another key player has been the Washington State Snowmobile Association. For much of the year, vehicles on Forest Service roads must be licensed and registered, and there are no trails in the Skykomish Ranger District designed for all-terrain vehicles. These regulations preclude the use of off-road vehicles and limit entry to some roads that are often difficult to access due to disrepair or seasonal flood damage. However, come winter, Forest Service roads are only plowed a short way into the woods, and then are open beyond for snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. Changing land designation from multiple-use Forest Service land to wilderness will not change the opportunities available for skiing or snowshoeing, since these traditional activities are

permissible in wilderness. Snowmobiling, on the other hand, is a motorized activity and is therefore strictly prohibited in wilderness areas.

The original Wild Sky proposal encompassed over 120,000 acres, including some of snowmobilers' favorite roads and trails, but after negotiations between the Washington State Snowmobile Association (WSSA) and the politicians proposing wilderness, the snowmobile organization agreed not to oppose the wilderness bill. Chris Fadden¹ testified as Vice President of WSSA in the 2004 legislative hearing, saying that his organization was originally opposed to the wilderness designation and had encouraged its members to write letters and send e-mails to Congressman Larsen and Senator Murray's offices. In response to this campaign and concerns aired at the Monroe workshop, the politicians' aids met with WSSA representatives. The snowmobile association attempted to rally support for their cause from other motorized groups, but was unsuccessful. Indeed, "WSSA found itself the solitary motorized group in opposition to the proposed legislation" (Legislative Hearing no. 108-105 2004, 49). Alone, the organization bargained with politicians for five months. This resulted in pairing down thousands of the original 120,000 acres. The proposal, however, still included Eagle Lake, an area popular with winter snowmobilers and summer fishermen alike. Without a concession to motorized access to Eagle Lake, WSSA decided that "WSSA would not support the wilderness bill, but...the Association may agree to remain neutral" (Legislative Hearing no. 108-105 2004, 49). Chris Fadden stresses this neutrality in his testimony, a feeling corroborated by the organization's website, which does not obviously mention Wild Sky.

¹ Chris Fadden originally got involved with snowmobile advocacy through a family friend who had negotiated continued snowmobile use in the Mount Baker Recreation Area on the south slope of Mount Baker, a compromise built into the 1984 Washington Wilderness Act. With this background, he entered negotiations representing a faction of motorized vehicle users who see wilderness designation as inevitable, and would rather work with the legislation than against it.

While this neutrality is far from a vote of support, their lack of opposition to the bill may be important for Congressional authorization. This is not to say that all snowmobilers are pleased with the proposed wilderness. After Chris Fadden testified at the 2004 hearing, WWSA met and passed a resolution against Wild Sky (Fadden 2008, personal communication). While there has not been vocal opposition from the group, it is clear that their members oppose the current proposal.

Although the Washington State Snowmobile Association appeared quieted after many of their favorite Skykomish Valley acres were written out of the wilderness, other snowmobile associations are not bound to this agreement and are free to voice their opposition to motorized-vehicle-excluding wilderness designations in general, and Wild Sky in particular. The Snowmobile Alliance of Western States (SAWS), founded in 2004 as a more radical offshoot of WSSA, feels it is more beneficial to hold strong to an ideal – no more wilderness – than it is to compromise on access issues (Fadden 2008, personal communication). SAWS chooses to fight against all wilderness rather than to negotiate boundaries and regulations. Their membership could become a powerful voice against wilderness considering that this organization represents motorized recreation enthusiasts in Washington, Idaho, and Montana, states with over twenty-three percent of the designated wilderness in the continental United States (wilderness.net).

The SAWS website flashes “action alert” across its homepage, linking visitors to newspaper articles, updates, and commentaries about federal legislation affecting motorized access to public lands. Reflecting their general opinion on wilderness, the SAWS website refers to the wilderness movement as “the anti-access movement” (Stewart 2007). They opposed Wild Sky Wilderness in 2004 and 2005, urging

likeminded individuals to contact their Senators and Representatives to oppose the bill. An article entitled “Washington State Forest Plan Revisions – Where are we at?” declares that “SAWS strongly opposes new wilderness areas where motorized use currently exists, and we also strongly oppose any Forest Service action to close any RWA [Recommended Wilderness Area] to snowmobile use” (Hurwitz 2006).

Unlike snowmobile recreation, off-road vehicle use does not directly conflict with Wild Sky, but Washington 4x4 organizations are nonetheless opposed to the proposal. According to members of two organizations active in the Cascades – the Boeing 4x4 Club and the Dirty 13 4x4 Club – they do not currently use any of the areas within the proposal (Clapp 2008, personal communication; Halley 2008, personal communication). Hence, for the most part, Wild Sky would not directly limit their recreational opportunities. They oppose Wild Sky, however, because they believe it would establish the possibility of being indirectly affected by what they call “precedent.” They argue that the area does not qualify as wilderness because it contains roads, culverts, bridges, and dams, and including these constructions would set a precedent for creating “non-pristine” wilderness elsewhere, possibly in places where they do recreate: “It just kind of makes you wonder what they could decide is the next wilderness” (Clapp 2008, personal communication). However, including these built structures in the National Wilderness Preservation System is not a new phenomenon. While the inclusion of these features would add yet another example of past human uses within Wilderness boundaries, it would not in and of itself be setting a precedent.

Wild Sky is, indeed, the leader in what advocates hope will be a new wave of Wilderness legislation, and it is possible that other areas now used for motorized

recreation could be affected by wilderness designation in the future.² As much as Wilderness advocates hope that Wild Sky will be just the first of several new wilderness additions in Washington, opponents are weary of this prospect, especially since future proposals are simply ideas; no one knows where the proposed lands would be or how regulations would affect recreation access. This opposition is not anti-wilderness, *per se*, but rather pro-access, and opponents' boundary and regulation concerns may be met through negotiation and compromise.

In addition to motorized vehicle users, hikers and horseback riders have a stake in wilderness designation. All versions of the Wild Sky Wilderness Act have called for the construction of a new trail system within and adjacent to the proposed wilderness, a benefit championed by hikers and stock users. The 2002 bill called for "hiking trails." A year later this was changed to "hiking and equestrian trails" (Report 107-747 2002; Report 108-131 2003), perhaps an effort to secure support from yet another interest group.

Whatever uses are intended for the new trails, the costs of planning, construction, and maintenance may be significant, a concern widely held by Wild Sky's opponents. Mark Rey of the USDA notes that it is more expensive to build trails in wilderness than in non-wilderness areas, since motorized equipment is not generally used within wilderness boundaries (Legislative Hearing 108-105 2004). The Congressional Budget Offices estimates that decommissioning roads and constructing trails will cost up to \$19 million between 2008 and 2012 (Congressional Budget Office 2007). However, there is nothing to ensure that this money will be secured.

² Already, another Washington wilderness – an addition to the south side of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness – is awaiting Congressional approval (WWC 2007).

Recreational groups – float plane pilots, snowmobilers, horseback riders, and hikers – have replaced the voices of the timber industry, which held sway when the last Washington wilderness legislation was passed in 1984. The views of the timber industry are presented by Gene Chase. Unlike most people testifying at the Congressional Hearings, he did not represent any organization or attach a title to his name. Speaking on record as a “Snohomish County Resident,” Gene Chase gains credibility through his experience. He has lived, worked, fished, hiked, and hunted in the Wild Sky area for 59 years. He grew up in Snohomish County, went to the University of Washington’s College of Forestry, owns five acres on the North Fork of the Skykomish River, and worked as a forester in the Skykomish Valley in the 1960s and 70s (Legislative Hearing 108-105 2004). He is opposed to Wild Sky and draws upon arguments heard before. He argues that the roads, culverts, and bridges disqualify the area as wilderness and that while the bill promises more access via new trails, these promises may never be kept. Further, he argues that there has been a “lack of process,” saying, “there hasn’t been enough, I feel, hearing and input involved in it [Wild Sky]” (Legislative Hearing 108-105 2004, 34).

However, Gene Chase’s testimony also reveals a personal history of economic dislocation and a fear that wilderness designation will hurt his business. His written testimony says:

I first began to practice forestry in the Wild Sky area in the 1960s...Beginning in the 1980’s, I worked throughout the entire Skykomish River area as a forest manager for a now-closed plywood company...I was a very active participant in our local roadless area review process...as well as an active participant in the process of creating the Alpine Lakes Wilderness and Henry M. Jackson Wilderness areas...Since 1986 I have owned and operated my own road contracting company. For the past 18 years, my firm has constructed roads and trails,

decommissioned roads, abandoned roads, and installed fish friendly culverts on several portions of the Wild Sky area, as well as other forested areas of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest...” (Legislative Hearing 108-105 2004, 36).

His resume records a history of economic dislocation. He worked as a forester, then for a plywood company. When the wood industry downsized in the 1980s, he began his own company building roads. A wilderness designation now threatens the future of that trade as well. Roads within the wilderness area will need to be decommissioned, a job his company may be contracted to complete, but then there will be no future contracts to maintain these former roadways. Stating that there has been a “lack of process,” Gene Chase signifies that he feels politically disenfranchised. Stating his economic history, he signifies that he feels Wild Sky will leave him economically disenfranchised.

A second representative of the timber industry was present for the Wild Sky hearings, but stood silently in the back of the room (Scott 2008, personal communication). As Tom Uniack of the Washington Wilderness Coalition said about recommending pro-wilderness witnesses for hearings, “You only get so many slots, and the most unconvincing thing is an environmental group talking about an environmental issue” (Uniack 2008, personal communication). So too, perhaps representatives of the timber industry are the least compelling argument against wilderness:

Rather than owning up publicly to their role and their behind-the-scenes lobbying, commodity developers often hide behind the “family recreation” face of off-road vehicles groups, but such deceptions have a way of coming to light. In one recent legislative campaign for wilderness [Wild Sky], the chief timber lobbyist [Will Hamilton] sat anonymously in the back of the Senate hearing room letting others, less obviously self-interested, be the public face of opposition (Scott 2004, 110).

Scott continues on to reveal that the website “Forests for People,” which advocates for motorized vehicle access to public lands, is legally registered to Will Hamilton (Scott

2004, 111). Although Hamilton's name is not present in Wild Sky documents, several individuals in the Forest Service suggested I talk with him about the timber industry's views on Wild Sky, further indicating that he has been closely involved with the proposal. The timber industry has been present in Wild Sky negotiations, but largely silent behind the guise of motorized recreation.

For the most part, Congressional offices have been able to address concerns from recreational communities through a series of negotiations. Each version of the bill has included special language to allow continued floatplane access to Lake Isabel. Windy Ridge, an area of concern to snowmobilers, was kept outside the Wilderness boundaries. The boundaries were drawn around private property near Silver Creek in order to ensure continued access. These compromises – none desired by wilderness advocates – are the political cost of garnering support for the bill, and are possible because they address concerns of location and regulation.

Ideology

Ideological concerns are more difficult to address. This opposition is generally led by Ed Husmann, a 28-year Sultan resident, apple orchard owner, President of the Snohomish County Farm Bureau, and board member of the Washington State Farm Bureau. He is famous among leadership of the off-road vehicle and snowmobile communities. Senator Murray's State Director, the policy director for the Washington Wilderness Coalition, and Forest Service personnel all recognize his name. He has written newspaper editorials, drafted resolutions opposing Wild Sky for Sultan and the Snohomish County Farm Bureau, invited Representative Richard Pombo to his property

and orchestrated a Wild Sky helicopter flyover, disseminated “No Wild Sky” bumper stickers, gathered signatures for a petition against Wild Sky, organized an anti-Wild Sky rally to coincide with the Wild Sky Festival in Index, and served as a witness in the two D.C. Congressional hearings.

Ed Husmann sees rural livelihoods as threatened by government regulation. When describing the work of the Farm Bureau, he says, “We at the Farm Bureau are constantly in battle with the regulations that are attempting to make farming...mostly impossible, actually” (Husmann 2008, personal communication). When I asked about Wild Sky, it didn’t take long to instead talk about government regulation and land use in general. He discussed Washington’s Growth Management Act (GMA), a statewide policy intended to control urban sprawl: “the GMA was a way of putting government in control of land use...I’d never gotten sideways with the government before...I’d always just been doing my thing...Then this thing really hit home.” (Husmann 2008, personal communication). He went on to describe his first “run-in” with the county. Along the road front of his property, he cleared some trees and dug a ravine to capture run-off, creating a pond where there had been a wetland and woods. The county said he needed a permit and that he needed to pay a fee for each yard of dirt – his dirt – that he moved. “And that’s where it all started. Then I realized that these guys are kind of like the enemy, I suppose. And that’s where we’re always fighting...I became politically active, angry” (Husmann 2008, personal communication). Wild Sky will not directly affect Ed Husmann’s farm. However, he opposes it because he views it as yet another case of the government making environmentally-guided land use decisions.

A small faction of Wild Sky's opposition argues that an "environmentally-guided" decision for wilderness protection may not be sound policy, since timber will still be harvested elsewhere: "...setting aside Northwest old growth could come at a high environmental cost, globally: it could take ten to thirty acres of taiga forest in northern Canada, Alaska, or Siberia to produce the wood of one acre in Washington State" (Dietrich 1992, 112). Indeed, since the spotted owl controversy, sixty percent of United States' timber harvests now take place in the Southern U.S (Tilley and Munn 2007) and a 50-year simulation of timber markets indicates that harvest restrictions in the Pacific Northwest will lead to increased harvests globally: "...by protecting its own resources, a nation or region may offer economic incentives for other nations to exploit their resources" (Kelson, Lilieholm, and Lyon 1994, 79). Thus, protecting forests domestically may not only result in the economic displacement of the Pacific Northwest timber industry and its employees, but also the global exportation of environmental degradation.³ In the case of Wild Sky, although individuals arguing against exporting environmental destruction are likely not familiar with these specific facts, they have witnessed the decline of the timber industry and know that lumber is being harvested elsewhere.

The idea that the land should be used for its highest extractive value is expressed by Ed Husmann:

It's never made any sense to me to have land that doesn't produce something. I mean to just have land for land sake isn't in the best interests of anybody, actually. So there should be some use. If a man has twenty acres, there should be some use of it other than just looking at it. And I suppose that's where I disagree with all these conservationists, see, they want to lock up the land and just let it go. Look at it, you know? You

³ This is a well-founded argument, but considering Wild Sky's steep slopes and fragile riparian areas, it may not be the best location for environmentally-sound resource extraction.

can't mow it or spray it or anything like that...Conservation makes no profit. It generates no jobs. It generates no wealth. All wealth that a nation has, that eventually comes down to individuals like us, comes from the ground. All wealth comes from the ground. If we lock up the ground, enough of the ground...your nation will go bankrupt (Husmann 2008, personal communication).

This is in direct contrast with the ideology of wilderness. In "Wilderness as a Form of Land Use" Aldo Leopold wrote, "The first idea is that wilderness is a resource, not only in the physical sense of the raw materials it contains, but also in the sense of a distinctive environment which may, if rightly used, yield certain social values" (Leopold 1925, 398). The wilderness movement is firmly rooted in this fundamentally different idea, and neither side – property rights nor wilderness advocates – will compromise their core values.

Almost everyone I spoke with, whether for or against Wild Sky, expressed an appreciation of existing wilderness areas, especially Alpine Lakes, which was established in 1976. Speaking of the Henry M. and Alpine Lakes, Mick Clapp of the Dirty 13 4x4 Club said, "...those were areas I didn't have a problem with. They were truly wilderness. There's nothing there...they fit the criteria so I didn't have a problem with that...they were truly wilderness. Wild Sky is not" (Clapp 2008, personal communication). This is to ignore the controversy, concern, and contention over these areas in the years preceding their designation in 1976 and 1984. The Alpine Lakes Wilderness had a checkerboard of private property in its management plan, purchased with federal funds (Paull 2008, personal communication) and the Henry M. contained remnants of a fire tower and grazing lands (Dwight N.d.). Today the label of wilderness has been firmly applied to these areas and is accepted, even championed, by opponents of Wild Sky.

But now, the argument is that we have enough wilderness already. The town of Sultan's city council passed a resolution against Wild Sky. Authored by Ed Husmann, this in part states:

WHEREAS The National Wilderness Preservation System contains over 600 wilderness areas, covering more than 105 million acres, and are in aggregate larger than the State of California, and

WHEREAS these wilderness lands represent one seventh (1/7) of all lands managed by the Federal Government, and which are nearly half of the lands contained in our National Parks System...

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Sultan is opposed to the Wild Sky Wilderness Proposal..." (Sultan 2006).

This is not a concern about boundaries or regulations, which can be negotiated, but rather quantity, and there is no way to determine when enough is enough. The National Park Service website says, "...only about 5% of the entire United States—an area slightly larger than the state of California—is protected as wilderness" (NPS). But depending on perspective, this same fact can be expressed as, "an area larger than California is already protected."

Doug Scott, who has studied the history and application of the Wilderness Act extensively, writes, "Nothing in the Wilderness Act or its legislative history states or implies any congressional expectation about the ultimate size of the National Wilderness Preservation System" (Scott 2004, 75). This is terrifying to people who think the System is already large enough. Wilderness advocates will always want more – more ecosystem representation, more watershed protection, more forest preservation. As proposals are made for additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System, boundaries can be negotiated, as they have been in Wild Sky, and there can be several "winners." But to place an "all or nothing" stipulation on additions to the Wilderness System – which is the

only way the ideological opposition would feel they have been responded to – results in only “winners” and “losers,” without space in between for compromise.

Expanding from a core belief that land should be used and that wilderness is non-use, the “Say No to Wild Sky” campaign bolsters itself with other arguments: Wild Sky does not qualify because it is not pristine, it will not bring jobs to the valley, and there is enough wilderness already. These arguments are not specifically anti-wilderness, but rather pro-slowness-the-wilderness-movement. As one 4x4 enthusiast said, “...everybody wants to love a tree. It’s the politically correct thing to do, right?” (Halley 2008, personal communication). Politically correct – meaning society has established a norm. There is no place for the anti-wilderness movement within this tree-loving norm, which forces the opposition to reframe the debate into terms of “pristine,” “economy,” and “enough.” Reframed in this way, the ranks of the anti-wilderness movement become champions of “real” wilderness. They are protecting the sanctity of wilderness (pristine), looking out for social interests (economy), and appreciating the wilderness we have (enough).

CHAPTER 7

THE FOREST SERVICE

Any individual or organization can voice an opinion on Wild Sky, but ultimately the Forest Service will be charged with managing the land. Although one or two employees may argue that it's not pristine enough to be wilderness, the major concerns of Forest Service employees have more to do with what happens after wilderness designation. Citizen wilderness advocates can rest easy after the Wild Sky Wilderness Act is passed, having completed their mission, but for local Forest Service employees, Congressional approval will be just the beginning of their mission. Boundaries will have to be surveyed and marked. Regulations need to be clearly posted at trailheads. More than this, the Act sets up expectations that will be difficult to accomplish for legal and financial reasons, and not due to lack of effort or desire on the part of the Forest Service.

Long-time local and regional Forest Service employees harbor a wealth of information about the Forest. Hikers who frequently use the area demonstrate familiarity by describing the rocks and trees they pass along the trail. Forest Service personnel are just as familiar, but in a different context. There are employees who know every inch of trail, where every pit-toilet is located, which campsites are popular with partiers, where the trail washes out every other year, where people like to practice target shooting, which roads are impassable, and where the last methamphetamine lab was found. In addition to this field experience, they have the paperwork experience of reporting violations, applying for grant money, navigating regulations, hiring employees, organizing public meetings, and so on. More than anyone else, they are familiar with the complex set of regulations governing their work, from environmental policies and public involvement, to

regulation enforcement and management directives. However, this expertise is often poorly understood by the public, which does not witness the behind-the-scenes planning that goes into their recreational experience.

For Wild Sky, it is largely true that, “There was a carefully crafted campaign of meeting with stakeholders and addressing issues early on...and when they [Congressional offices] found issues that were addressable, they did address them” (Uniack 2008, personal communication). However, there is one notable exception: the concerns and expertise of local Forest Service employees – both at the District and Forest levels – have not been adequately heard. In some ways, there are clear reasons for this. The history of relations between the Forest Service and wilderness advocates has been rife with tension, to say the least. This is not a critique at an individual level, but rather historically and organizationally.

Resources and Recreation

The predecessors to the National Forests – the “Forest Reserves” – were established in 1891 with the stipulation that natural resources on these lands were to be “managed for the people” (American Forestry Foundation n.d.). This broad mandate was ambiguous in that it did not specifically define the function of Forest Reserves, neglecting to distinguish between “preservation” and “conservation” (Nash 2001, 133). This was clarified with the Forest Management Act of 1897, which stated that the purpose of the reserves was “to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of citizens of the United States” (in Nash 2001, 137). The National Forest Reserves’ 1905 “Use Book” critiques private timber practices that exhaust lumber

supplies and then move to new locations, “leaving behind desolation and depression” (Pinchot 1905, 7), but the manual simultaneously expresses the intention of private use of the natural resources:

You will see to it that the water, wood, and forage of the reserves are conserved and wisely used for the benefit of the homebuilder first of all, upon whom depends the best permanent use of lands and resources alike. The continued prosperity of the agricultural, lumbering, mining, and live-stock interests is directly dependent upon a permanent and accessible supply of water, wood, and forage as well as upon the present and future use of these resources under businesslike regulation, enforced with promptness, effectiveness, and common sense (Pinchot 1905, 11).

National Forest land was essentially incorporated into the market economy while simultaneously attempting to prevent the imitation of corporate practices.

When the railroad was being built, National Forests supplied ties. When suburbanizing America needed to build houses, schools, churches, and sidewalks, the National Forests provided lumber. After WWII demand for timber from federal forests increased and “national forest management increasingly resembled industrial forestry practices” (Hirt 1994, xxvi). Economic incentives gained from timber receipts tied the National Forests and local counties to the timber industry:

Ten percent of gross Forest Service receipts automatically return to the agency for road construction (authorized by an act of March 4, 1913). Twenty-five percent of receipts are distributed to the local counties where the timber was harvested ‘in lieu of taxes’ (authorized by an act of May 23, 1908)... (Hirt 1994, xxxiii).

Meeting demand and increasing profits meant cutting costs, which brought about the highly criticized practices of clear-cut harvesting. After World War II there was significant incentive for the Forest Service to meet public timber demands.

However, the post-World War II era also witnessed increased recreation in National Forests, and wilderness and timber values increasingly came into conflict (Hirt

1994, xxv, 45; Marsh 2007, 10). The Forest Service had “invented wilderness” with the L-Regulations and the U-Regulations of the 1920s and 1930s (Nash 2001, 220; Scott 2004, 29-35; Marsh 2007, 5), but these administratively-protected areas were sometimes adjusted to meet the wishes of the timber industry (Marsh 2007). Although they “invented wilderness,” when timber interests called for more trees the Forest Service adjusted the borders of the “wild” and “wilderness” areas, often trading lowland forests for high alpine meadows. This happened in the Three Sisters and Mount Jefferson Wilderness areas in Oregon (Marsh 2007). Acre for acre, these swaps may have been a good deal because more wilderness land was gained than was given, but this is to assume that one parcel of land equals another, even though land value changes with location and perspective. The public, however, found it could not trust the Forest Service to operate independent of corporate interests. The Forest Service and its corporate partners held governance over wilderness administration in National Forests until citizens – environmentalists – “secured wilderness” with the Wilderness Act of 1964.

The Forest Service, having in part “invented” the American wilderness system by designating primitive, wild, and wilderness areas before 1964, was reluctant to support the Wilderness Act. This legislation not only expanded wilderness to include lands held by other federal agencies, but also required an inventory of federal land holdings suitable as potential additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

The agency promoted a set of standards for wilderness based on ideals of a pristine landscape free of all human influence. While much of the motivation for its strict definition of wilderness was based on heartfelt idealism...foresters used their idealized standards to carefully segregate the “pristine” and picturesque alpine areas from the managed commercial forests of the lowlands (Marsh 2007, 72).

Conservationists, frustrated with fluid wilderness boundaries and in search of permanence, pushed for the Wilderness Act, making wilderness preservation law by convincing Congress to pass and President Johnson to sign the 1964 legislation. The result is that the power of *recommendation* is now shared between the President, Congress, citizens, and government agencies, but the power of *decision* is granted to Congress alone. In this equation the Forest Service is denied autonomy to designate and decommission wilderness, and the history of distrust lives on.

Despite historical tension, the Forest Service as a whole cannot oppose all wilderness designations; it would lead to further deterioration of trust. Recently, Mark Rey, USDA's Under Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment, pledged the Bush administration's willingness to sign the Wild Sky Wilderness Act, should it pass through Congress. However, stating that "the Department does not oppose the designation of Wild Sky Wilderness" (Senate Hearing 108-68 2003, 7), is hardly an enthusiastic endorsement. Like the Washington State Snowmobile Association, the USDA appears neutral at the federal level. Nevertheless, wilderness advocates interpret his seemingly reluctant statement of support as an enthusiastic administrative approval of Wild Sky (Owen 2008, personal communication).

Regionally, it might seem that the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest administration should be supportive of Wild Sky. Their 2006 Monitoring Report begins with a brief geographic description of the Forest, followed by the Forests' goals, which are largely consistent with wilderness protection: "Management emphases include designated wilderness, the protection and restoration of riparian and aquatic ecosystems, management for late-successional and old-growth habitat, and providing the public with a

wide spectrum of developed and dispersed recreation opportunities” (MBS National Forest, 2006, 1). Wilderness and ecosystems are mentioned first and foremost. Indeed, the report notes that Mount Baker-Snoqualmie has more wilderness visits than any other Forest in the U.S. However, when wilderness is discussed specifically within the report, the Wild Sky Wilderness Proposal is listed as a “challenge,” alongside sanitation issues and snowmobile trespassing, rather than as an “opportunity” (MBS National Forest, 2006).

Local Concerns

In reality, Wild Sky is both an opportunity and a challenge. Wild Sky has been an opportunity for free publicity, bringing visibility to a small district. This may mean more visitors, strengthening demonstrated need in grant applications and employment positions. It may even bring more revenue through \$5 a day Northwest Forest Pass sales. And certainly wilderness is an opportunity for long-term ecosystem protection. However, in the meantime, it will likely pose more management challenges than opportunities.

Currently Skykomish’s 316,522 acre district holds more than 112,000 acres of wilderness. Add to that Wild Sky’s 106,000 acres, and more than two-thirds of the district will be wilderness. Administratively, this would result in three different wilderness area boundaries, regulations, databases, and entry signs. This issue – a concern that one more wilderness will result in a mire of paperwork – could have easily been addressed by making the area an addition to the adjacent Henry M. Jackson Wilderness. However, on the side of wilderness advocates, a “wilderness addition” does

not have the same panache as “the first new wilderness area in Washington State in over twenty years,” especially when that new wilderness is called “Wild Sky.”

A second Forest Service concern is drafting a boundary report. The new wilderness boundaries will have to be surveyed and described. A lengthy document for any wilderness area, the process is often made easier when the boundaries follow contour lines (Paull 2008, personal communication). For the most part, Wild Sky’s boundaries do not, dipping up and down and in and out. These are lines on a map, not contours on the terrain, which will make surveying and describing the boundaries an arduous, expensive process (Paull 2008, personal communication).

Wild Sky’s biggest challenge comes from expectations. The Act itself calls for new trails to be constructed and old roads to be destroyed. The 2007 Wild Sky Wilderness Act states under “Administration Provisions”:

(b) New Trails-

(1) The Secretary of Agriculture shall consult with interested parties and shall establish a trail plan for Forest Service lands in order to develop—

(A) a system of hiking and equestrian trails within the wilderness designated by this Act in a manner consistent with the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.); and

(B) a system of trails adjacent to or to provide access to the wilderness designated by this Act.

(2) Within two years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall complete a report on the implementation of the trail plan required under this Act. This report shall include the identification of priority trails for development (Report 110-121 2007)

These sound like simple directives, but due to historically low funding for recreation, and combined with current environmental restrictions and efforts towards public involvement, these mandates pose long-term administrative and financial challenges.

Traditionally, Forest Service funding is supplemented by local timber harvest contracts (Hirt 1998), but with fewer acres to contract out, wilderness designation may mean that employees will be expected to manage wilderness – the country’s highest level of land protection – with less money for salaries, maintenance, management, and compliance. Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, to which Wild Sky Wilderness would belong, has seen a sharp decline in its budget in recent years. The recreation budget, once almost \$4 million for trail maintenance, wilderness management, heritage projects, and developed recreation, is now less than \$1.5 million. Of this, trail maintenance allocations are currently half of what they were in the early 1990s and no money has been allocated for wilderness management since 2000 (MBS 2006). What’s more, timber sales have been brought down from over 450 million board feet in the early 1970s to almost nothing from 1996 to the present (MBS 2006, 3) due to administration changes, The Northwest Forest Plan, endangered species listings, and changes in public sentiment. Timber harvests could conceivably increase with a new Forest Plan or recovery of endangered species, but this is unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future. The stagnant timber economy is even acknowledged by the Congressional Budget Office when determining the net cost of passing Wild Sky:

Designating federal lands as wilderness could result in forgone offsetting receipts (a credit against direct spending) if, under current law, those lands would generate income from activities such as timber harvesting and mining. According to the Forest Service, however, these lands currently generate no significant receipts and are not expected to do so over the next

10 years...any forgone receipts...would be negligible (Report 107-747 2002, 6).

In the Skykomish Ranger District, reductions in funding have resulted in current employment of only a small fraction of the former numbers of field-based employees. Down from almost 100 employees and thirty-person youth training programs in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Skykomish Ranger District employed only a little over a dozen people during the summer of 2007. Attempts to combat a dearth of funding have included instituting a regional recreation fee program and seeking supplementary funds through grant applications. However, the fees are distributed based on factors such as a district's size, miles of trails, and numbers of visitors; Skykomish is the smallest district, translating into the least funds (Paull 2008, personal communication). Using fee money, the district has been successful in matching grants, but the application process is time consuming, placing significant strains on the few full time staff members. Unless funding changes dramatically, wilderness designation, with its commercial harvest restrictions and correlated budget decreases, will pose long-term challenges to the Skykomish Ranger District.

Although erroneously perceived as non-management (Husmann 2008, personal communication) and therefore cheap, designated wilderness must be managed to maintain its wilderness character. In order to reduce visitor impacts on the wilderness areas and to ensure a wilderness experience, toilets must be dug, signs need to be posted, and garbage has to be carried out. The trails that visitors use must be constructed and maintained. Because of limited road access and mechanical tool restrictions, these maintenance activities are time and labor intensive. Gary Paull, Wilderness and Trails Program Coordinator for Mount Baker-Snoqualmie estimates that it costs thirty percent

more to maintain a trail by hand in wilderness areas than to use power tools in non-wilderness (Paull 2008, personal communication).

One of the problems with Wild Sky, from a Forest Service perspective, is that it increases expectations without increasing funding. This is the major federal concern holding up Wild Sky in the Senate. Senator Coburn (R-OK) has stopped over fifty public lands bills on charges that bills should not pass through Congress if funding is not available (Engber 2008, personal communication). This is a sensible argument, but experts think Wild Sky will soon pass in the Senate anyway (Engber 2008, personal communication). This will leave the Skykomish Ranger District holding the expectations, but not the purse.

Fiscal estimates prepared for Congress estimate that Wild Sky will cost \$19 million between 2008 and 2012:

...designating the proposed wilderness would increase the agency's administrative costs by roughly \$250,000 to \$500,000 a year...the agency would spend \$6 million over the 2008-2010 period to remove roads that currently exist within the proposed wilderness, \$4 million over the 2008-2010 period to design and implement a system of trails... (Congressional Budget Office 2007).

Working within a decreasing budget, the \$10 million needed for trail construction and road deconstruction would be a significant change to the overall Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest budget.

Trail Construction

Even if money is allocated for trail maintenance in Wild Sky, it is unlikely that new trails will be constructed, even though an expectation for new trails has been established. The District has been attempting to build trails in the Wild Sky area for

almost twenty years, but has been unsuccessful due to environmental regulations and public concerns (detailed below: Davis 2008, personal communication; Paull 2008, personal communication). It does not seem that Wild Sky's wilderness designation or even increased National Forest budgets would make the process more viable.

Alpine Lakes, the closest wilderness area to the Seattle metro area, is one of the most popular wilderness areas in the state, and has been since it was designated in 1976 (Wenatchee and MBS 1993). Concerns about the area's use – over-use – resulted in an Environmental Assessment of wilderness recreation use and subsequent recommendations to limit visitor affects on the environment and to preserve a solitary wilderness experience. The top three issues raised in public meetings were: too many people, resource damage, and spontaneity; the top three solutions were education, non-wilderness development, and permits (Wenatchee and MBS 1993, 13-14). Permitting systems, which would have offered a limited number of overnight camping permits each day, were dismissed by the public as limiting their ability to plan spontaneous trips into the wilderness. Permits were established in the Enchantments, a fragile high-alpine area on the east side of the Cascades, where overuse had caused significant environmental degradation. However, in response to public opinion, the Forest Service did not institute permits elsewhere in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness.

Public opposition also struck down a second proposed solution, non-wilderness development. This would have entailed building destination trails outside of Alpine Lakes, and for the Skykomish Ranger District most of these trails would have been in the area now being proposed as Wild Sky. Appendix 8 of the Environmental Assessment

(Wenatchee and MBS 1993, 109) notes possible trail additions in order of highest priority:

- Eagle Lake
- Paradise Meadows
- Skyline Lake
- Lake Isabel
- Ragged Ridge

Of the top five on the list, four are now within the Wild Sky proposal.

In response to public opinion and environmental regulations, none of the trails have been built. The first attempt at non-wilderness trail construction was a path from San Juan Hill, over the crest of Eagle Rock, past Boulder, Sunset, Simms, and Eagle Lakes, and connecting to the Barclay Lake trail. By all accounts, it would have been beautiful. It is beautiful. That was the problem. Local users know about this route, unmarked on maps but easy to follow, and traverse the mountains and lakes without the distractions of trail blazes, signs, and other visitors. This opportunity for off-trail, solitary travel is a “true wilderness experience” for those in the know. Further, anglers stock the lakes, returning to reap the benefits – alone – without fear of the public over harvesting their lakes. It seems that this proposed trail, with its alluring vistas and secluded mountain lakes, would have successfully redirected some visitors away from Alpine Lakes Wilderness. However, because the Forest Service listened to opinion in letters and at public meetings, there is no trail.

Going back to the drawing board, there were more public meetings where the Forest Service employees suggested trails and the public added recommendations. The employees then developed write-ups on each suggestion with the pros and cons, addressing issues like private property, large trail-less areas, old growth groves, and

vistas. The Forest Service presented these analyses to the public, received comment, narrowed the selection down to five options, and then held a vote. The public chose the Alpine-Baldy Trail and the Forest Service went to work scoping the area, flagging the location, and carrying out botanic, wildlife, and cultural surveys.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published a revised Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan. Although fewer than 20 bears are thought to exist in the entire North Cascades region, the combination of forests, streams, and mountains offer “potential” habitat that must be protected. As part of the new management directives, the Forest Service now has to comply with a “no net loss” travelways plan. Within the North Cascades Grizzly Bear Recovery Area, which includes most of the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National forest and all of the Skykomish Ranger District, for every mile of trail built a mile of road or trail must be decommissioned elsewhere¹ (Davis 2008, personal communication; Paull 2008, personal communication). This increases the cost of building trails, but more importantly raises management obstacles. As seen in the case of Wild Sky, closing roads – even roads that are inaccessible to most passenger vehicles – is not popular with the segment of the population that enjoys snowmobile access, off road vehicle recreation, and hunting from these limited access roads. Further, the policy pits trail advocates head to head against road advocates. Protection of grizzly bear habitat comes at a cost of limiting the possibilities for trail construction.

The Skykomish trails project started in the early 1990s with the Alpine Lakes Environmental Assessment, but despite the Forest Service’s best efforts, it has not come to fruition. Original funding came from Congressional earmarks, but later funds were

¹ Decommissioning roads within Wild Sky’s boundaries may provide an opportunity to construct an equal number of miles of new trail. However, it is unclear whether the grizzly bear recovery regulations would be applied in this way.

contingent on fluctuating budget allocations, and decreases in funds led to a regional emphasis on maintaining old trails rather than constructing new trails. The Alpine-Baldy Trail was sidelined from 1998-2006, and is now under construction. However, by the time it is completed it will have taken over fifteen years to build the one trail.

Threatened Land

To some people in the Forest Service, the Wild Sky area seems like it is already protected, and that there is no threat (anonymous 2008, personal communication). This is curious, since an early stimulus of the renewed Washington wilderness movement was the 1995 Salvage Logging Rider, which illustrated that administrative or legislative changes can eliminate environmental protections (Owen 2008, personal communication). People who have become wilderness activists more recently do not mention the Rider in relation to Wild Sky. This is because the wilderness paradigm places advocates within an offensive, rather than defensive position. The Wilderness Act affords citizens the opportunity to be *for* wilderness rather than *against* logging, the Forest Service, motorized vehicles, the market economy, or any other development “threat” (Nash 2001, 222; Scott 2004, 43). There appears to be no threat because wilderness legislation allows citizens to be proactive, rather than reactive. Further, the perceived lack of threat is exacerbated by current conditions of regional economic dislocation from the logging industry and increased environmental regulations.

The slogan “Save Wild Sky” causes one to ask – “Save it from what?” The proposal’s roots in the Salvage Logging Rider, which suspended federal environmental regulations and allowed for harvests that were previously blocked by these laws (Dorn

1996), would be an obvious answer. However, considering the expiration of the Rider, significant decreases in regional timber harvests, overlapping environmental regulations, and public opinion, logging is not an immediate threat: "...as a practical matter, the issue has changed from whether to conserve old-growth forests to how to conserve them" (Thomas et.al. 2006, 285). Essentially, logging Wild Sky's old growth is not an immediate threat.

Then, perhaps it is the Forest Service that is the threat. This may not be the intended message, but this is what is heard. It is easy for wilderness advocates to say to a Forest or District, "It's not you we don't trust, it's who might come after you." But when wilderness designation takes the power of decision out of the hands of the Forest Service, it is difficult to internalize this comment and not think that the public is really saying, "We don't trust you to do your job." The slogan sounds like, "Save Wild Sky from the Forest Service." On this level, for some Forest Service employees the campaign for wilderness feels like personal criticism.

While many people share the sentiment that there is no immediate threat to Wild Sky, it is especially strong when heard from the Forest Service. Enveloped in this belief are issues of management dislocation, public opinion, and a feeling of personal attacks. The weight of the National Forest's founding mission, "to provide the greatest amount of good for the greatest amount of people in the long run" (USFS 2008), sits heavily on managers' shoulders. A matrix of environmental regulations, management mandates, and public opinion makes it virtually impossible for Forest personnel to study, select, and carry out land use directives, even when those decisions are guided by their best efforts at

public involvement. Surely, when public input and environmental regulations mean that it takes twenty years to build a trail, the Wild Sky area seems like it is already protected.

Prior to 1964, the Forest Service had ultimate control over granting wilderness or wild area protection to land within their jurisdiction, but the public could not trust the Forest Service to stay out of the market economy. The 1939 “U-Regulations” required public hearings, but still the Forest Service had authority to enact wilderness protections regardless of public input. The Wilderness Act democratized this process, making Congress the sole proprietor of wilderness. Today, any individual or organization that can get Congressional attention can influence wilderness designation. Under this system the Forest Service merely serves an advisory role. The expertise of Forest Service employees should not just be used as a resource when suitable to wilderness advocacy organizations, but the relationship should be a collaboration in which wilderness advocates and Congressional officials mutually make decisions with the land’s managers – the Forest Service employees. These individuals know “their” Forest well, and their knowledge of current use, local opinions, regulations, and the natural resources of the land may prove invaluable to developing wilderness boundaries and regulations.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS: BEYOND WILD SKY

If the promises surrounding Wild Sky hold true, then benefits will be shared locally, regionally, and nationally. Watershed protection will help protect salmon runs and alleviate the stresses on downstream farmers. Decommissioning roads will decrease sediment loads in rivers and streams. New trails and the title “wilderness” will draw more visitors to the area, and these visitors will stop in restaurants, spend nights in hotels, hire guides, and contribute to recreation budgets through purchase of the Northwest Forest Pass. Businesses may even want to relocate in the suburbs of Seattle to take advantage of additional wilderness opportunities. The local economy, area watershed, state recreation industry, and National Wilderness Preservation System will all benefit. However, these promises may not all come to fruition.

The most practical promises are watershed, low elevation forest, and habitat protection. The range of habitat protection offered in Wild Sky, from salmon bearing streams and old growth forests to high peaks and alpine meadows, may help to restore grizzly populations and strengthen salmon runs. Large stands of forests may mitigate local flooding and provide clean water for downstream users. Wilderness status would ensure that these resources and the natural system functions they supply will be maintained into the future. In the past, the cost of these protections would have been measured in lost timber revenue, but today the “loss to the timber program from Wild Sky is negligible” (anonymous 2008, personal communication). In this sense, there are few costs to protecting Wild Sky.

However, the expectations written into the legislation will create long-term challenges for the Skykomish Ranger District, already suffering from budget cuts. Many of the contested roads in Wild Sky are already impassable due to flooding or disrepair, but decommissioning these roads – restoring them to their natural state – is an expensive endeavor estimated to cost \$6 million (Congressional Budget Office 2007). The proposal mandates that a new trail system be studied – costing another \$4 million – but district employees have been working towards this goal since 1993, making little progress amidst a mire of environmental regulations and public opinion. It is not likely that wilderness designation will improve the prospects for a trail system. The Wild Sky legislation promises action without promising funds, leaving the Skykomish Ranger District with expectations that will be difficult to meet.

The broadest hopes built into the Wild Sky campaign are that wilderness designation will benefit the local and regional economy. The local towns, built on resource extraction and the railroad, have a history of “boom and bust” economies. Where over 1,000 people were once employed in each town, now the local economy cannot support present populations of only a couple hundred people, and these once thriving resource towns are becoming bedroom communities for people who work down valley. If the timber industry still had a hold on the valley, as it did in 1984 when the Washington State Wilderness Act was passed, Wild Sky would not be on the table for discussion. The future of the Sky Valley towns may be in recreation and tourism, but even these industries are dependent on a broader stable economy and are not necessarily the panacea for a local “boom and bust” history.

If the Wild Sky Wilderness Act becomes law, it will provide for long-term wilderness protection, but Wild Sky will also need long-term support in order to meet the promises and expectations built into the bill. The day the legislation is signed by the President, wilderness organizations will celebrate in their offices, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* will publish positive press, and the bill's "Congressional Champions" will feel their efforts have been successful. The wilderness community will be tempted to move on to other Washington wilderness proposals, capitalizing upon the momentum and energy surrounding Wild Sky to add yet another area to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

The challenge for the wilderness community will be to pledge long-term commitment to Wild Sky that matches the long-term wilderness protection. Recognizing the expectations facing the Forest Service, wilderness organizations should be prepared to offer volunteer hours to write grants, make donations, and shoulder a Pulaski. They must be prepared to lobby Congressmen for recreation budgets. In order to help local economies to prosper, organization newsletters should include information on where to eat, where to stay, and which guides to hire when visiting Wild Sky. Wilderness advocacy should not end with successful legislation, but should continue working towards successful collaboration. The day after the legislation is signed by the President, wilderness advocates must be ready to stand by the Forest Service, working together to ensure that Wild Sky's promises are not empty.

So too must the federal government be prepared to offer funding for continued management of the National Wilderness Preservation System. As our country's most protected land, wilderness requires management and maintenance in order to ensure that

visitors do not impair wilderness conditions. Wilderness is not defined by a lack of management, but rather is itself a type of management, and designations must be followed with budget allocations that offer perpetual wilderness support.

Wilderness designation is an act of compromise, and always has been, especially in the National Forests where a policy of multiple uses is a guiding principle. Some areas will be harvested, others will be kept wild, some areas will allow motorized vehicles, and others will be campgrounds. The Forest Service, wilderness advocates, motorized vehicle users, the timber industry, local citizens, and federal politicians all need to make compromises. Each of these groups feels it is in the best position to select the land value that is the “greatest good” for the “greatest number.” Seasoned federal politicians are familiar with the process of negotiations and compromise – these are the tools of the American political system – but their expertise at the local level may be limited.

Wilderness advocates feel they are doing what is best for the country, preserving our wild places for future generations of salmon, grizzlies, and fellow Americans. Snowmobilers and 4x4 riders want to preserve access for their hobbies, but they also hike, camp, and fish, putting them in a position to also understand non-motorized recreational communities. However, individuals’ varying values and differing degrees of participation within these recreational communities result in diverse visions for land use policy. When activities conflict with one another compromises can be made to adjust boundaries or change regulations, but when values conflict compromise becomes impossible.

Generally it is the Forest Service that is charged with negotiating these compromises, but wilderness designation offers the opportunity for Congress to take on

these challenges. Based on the concept of multiple uses, the Forest Service has struggled since its creation with deciding which uses will prevail. In the words of Gifford Pinchot, the first head of the Forest Service, the forests should be managed "to provide the greatest amount of good for the greatest amount of people in the long run" (USFS 2008), but to judge what is "good" and who is to benefit is a difficult task. These decisions – whether emphasizing logging, habitat protection, backcountry experiences, or developed recreation – are a product of the times and subject to change.

Wilderness, on the other hand, is an attempt to prevent change. It is precisely this sense of permanence that gives proponents their greatest hope and opponents their greatest fear. On both sides, the permanence of wilderness – the goal of wilderness advocates, not the reality of wilderness – is misadvertised. Mike Town, president of Friends of Wild Sky, said of the Wilderness Act, "...it sets a set of management directions that really can't be altered. They're permanent" (Town 2008, personal communication). Similarly, an off-road vehicle user said of Wild Sky, "This is a big thing. It changes our public land forever" (Halley 2008, personal communication). The Wilderness Preservation System strives for permanence, but the reality is that Congress can designate wilderness and Congress can un-designate wilderness. Today's political climate makes the suggestion of reductions to the Wilderness System unacceptable to many Americans, and is hence avoided by Congressional representatives. This is the political protection woven into the Wilderness Act.

But opponents are skeptical of permanence. What if there was severe flooding or drought? Could a dam be built? What about wildfire? Would my home be protected? What if someone breaks their leg? Will a helicopter come? How will private property

owners access their land? What if we experience a timber famine? Could we look to the wilderness for trees? These are all variations of questions I heard during interviews, each premised on exceptional circumstances, rather than norms, and each of which can be met with exceptions as necessary. The 1964 Wilderness Act states explicitly,

...such measures may be taken as may be necessary in the control of fire, insects, and diseases, subject to such conditions as the Secretary [of Agriculture] deems desirable

and

Within wilderness areas in the national forests designated by this Act, (1) the President may...authorize prospecting for water resources, the establishment and maintenance of reservoirs, water conservation works, power projects, transmission lines, and other facilities needed in the public interest, including the road construction and maintenance essential to development and use thereof...

and

In any case where State-owned or privately owned land is completely surrounded by national forest lands within areas designated by this Act as wilderness, such State or private owner shall be given such rights as may be necessary to assure adequate access... (The Wilderness Society 2004, 16-19).

These exceptions are the “loopholes” in the Wilderness Act. It is true that wilderness designation makes it more difficult for some exceptions to be made. For example, the District Ranger must approve emergency evacuations via helicopter, but positive working relations with rescue companies ensure that true emergencies are given priority over preserving the wilderness experience. In the case of fire, several experienced firefighters noted that when private property may be threatened, blazes are fought with the same vigor and mechanical means in wilderness as anywhere else in the Forest (anonymous, personal communication). And if Congress decides that the land is better used for timber harvest than wilderness, future generations of elected officials can remove an area from

the Wilderness Preservation System. In these ways, wilderness is not necessarily forever. Permanence is the goal, not the reality, a nuance unintentionally obfuscated by rhetoric from both sides.

When seen as a decision for the present – not a permanent decision, but a question of what to do with the land for now – there is greater consensus. A leader of an off-road vehicle club said, “I don’t want to see it logged. I want to see it left the way it is” (Halley 2008, personal communication). Another off-road user said, “...I don’t want to see it all logged...” (Clapp 2008, personal communication). When I asked people where they would draw the wilderness boundaries, many people said that there is no need to draw boundaries because the Wild Sky area is being managed well already. Wild Sky is *de facto* wilderness and advocates hope to make it designated wilderness, ensuring that current management will continue: “We’re actually trying to keep it the same...things will change unless you stop them. Wilderness is not allowing things to change, making sure that your kids and grandkids will have the same experiences you did. Because unless you do something about it, it will change” (Uniack 2008, personal communication).

In many ways, Wild Sky is already protected, but this does not mean that there is no threat. Overlapping environmental restrictions of Late Successional Oldgrowth, Roadless Area policies, and the North Cascades Grizzly Bear Recovery Area block timber harvests, trail construction, and road building. Current management policies are not likely to change in the near future, as they would require re-drafting the Northwest Forest Plan, changing Roadless Area legislation, and recovering listed Endangered Species. However, these changes are not inconceivable. The Roadless Area rule has

been repeatedly challenged in court and the Salvage Logging Rider successfully suspended environmental laws in order to encourage harvests (Dorn 1995; Owen 2008, personal communication). Before 1964, feeling that the Forest Service's administrative protections of *de facto* wilderness were not substantial enough, wilderness advocates pushed for the Wilderness Act. Now, feeling that federal administrations will not necessarily protect *de facto* wilderness, wilderness advocates are pushing for additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Today's threat is amorphous, not so much a tangible timber industry, but rather a constantly shifting political environment.

A common interest largely held by Wild Sky's proponents and opponents to "keep things the way they are," is obscured by the feelings of political dislocation. To many, federally designated wilderness is simply yet another case of the federal government telling local institutions what to do with local land. Leading this segment of the opposition, Ed Husmann "got sideways" with the county after constructing a pond, then fought with the state over the Growth Management Act, and now is working against the federal government and Wild Sky (Husmann 2008, personal communication). Even though the aims of wilderness preservation – forest protection and recreation – may be held in common, for many people the term "wilderness" is alienating, signifying government control.

In light of this, including local communities from the beginning of the proposal process may help to alleviate the veils of power and secrecy assumed to be part of wilderness designation. Even before the 2001 Index Town Meeting there were rumors that the government was going to turn it into an international peace park, close popular Jack's Pass Road, and kick people out of their homes (Albert 2008, personal

communication). Open communication and early collaboration may help to deaden these rumors.

Since the inception of Wild Sky, Washington's Congressional delegation has made a concerted effort to reach out to the public and negotiate reasonable wilderness boundaries. The Index town meeting and workshops in Seattle and Monroe helped to identify stakeholders and negotiations followed. Float planes will be allowed continued access to Lake Isabel and large groups of Boy Scouts and youth groups will be allowed continued access to Lake Barclay. Snohomish County can build and maintain a repeater site within the wilderness and Windy Ridge will remain outside the wilderness, allowing continued access for snowmobilers. And for wilderness advocates – 106,000 acres of forests, rivers, and mountains may soon become part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

The process has not been perfect, but this leaves lessons to be learned, not a proposal to be scrapped. As Tom Uniack of the Washington Wilderness Coalition said:

We haven't had any new wilderness in Washington State since 1984...So that's really almost a generation of folks in the wilderness community that haven't really had the hands-on experience, the public certainly hasn't been hearing about wilderness proposals since there haven't been any, and our delegation also - the Congressional delegation – isn't in the habit of doing these things.

Already the public, wilderness advocates, and the Congressional delegation have learned many lessons.

A flurry of newspaper articles has brought the issue of wilderness to the general public, where the spirited debate had citizens bringing up issues and clarifying misconceptions among themselves (Sound Off 2007). Like everyone else in Washington, the motorized recreation community has not been involved with wilderness since 1984.

Even people who were already familiar with wilderness as a recreation destination are being exposed to the politics the protection entails.

The wilderness community is also learning lessons. Recovering from losing a generation of wilderness advocacy experience, the Washington wilderness community feels they are now better able to anticipate opposition. Recently, Congressman Reichert (R-WA) proposed an addition to Alpine Lakes Wilderness, which was not the product of community meetings. Instead, early efforts were made to collect supportive “testimonies” from a wide range of interested parties, preempting the arguments of opposition (WWC website). Although this method may be easier and less time consuming, unfortunately many peoples’ voices will not be heard and wilderness designation is more likely to continue to be perceived as the result of environmentalists and big government making local decisions.

The Congressional offices most closely involved with Wild Sky have learned different lessons. The Seattle meeting should not have been held at the Mountaineers’ Club, an error that may be avoided in the future. John Engber, Senator Murray’s State Director, knew little of wilderness before Wild Sky, but is now quite familiar with the designation. His advice for the proposal process is, “You can never do enough outreach. It’s really important to identify impacted communities” (Engber 2008, personal communication). This sentiment has been proven through actions: the meeting in Index was an informational format with a panel of “experts” fielding questions from the audience; the meetings in Monroe and Seattle, organized by the Congressional offices, were workshops with displayed maps and opportunities for written (but not vocal) comments. Although the Congressional delegation didn’t organize the Index meeting,

they surely learned from it. Whereas the system of meetings and negotiations used for Wild Sky was abandoned in favor of a less participatory process for the Alpine Lakes addition, perhaps Congressional offices will move towards increased community participation.

It is time to build on the lessons of transparency and inclusion that Washington's federal officials have learned. In the words of Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend:

“...every effort should be made to overcome ambiguity, and to be explicit about why, where, when and how people are expected to participate in the conservation initiative...When this is done, it is usually found that certain conditions and forms of support are needed, i.e., that participation needs to be allowed, facilitated and promoted. It may seem to be a paradox, but people's participation in a conservation initiative has to be specifically planned.” (Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend 1997)

The 1964 Wilderness Act clearly outlines the process of proposing wilderness for the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior. Hearings and public notification are required in order to ensure transparency and public participation, policies that grew out of public distrust of federal agencies. It is assumed that placing wilderness designation into the hands of Congress will ensure that proposals are shaped by an inclusive democracy. However, any citizen inclusion on the part of elected officials is voluntary, not mandated by the Wilderness Act. As the Act stands today, there is no process. This must change.

Wild Sky should not necessarily serve as a template for future wilderness proposals, but it may be the starting place for future campaigns. Mark Rey, Senator Larry Craig, Seattle Newspapers, and wilderness organizations all praise Senator Murray and Representative Larsen's efforts towards public involvement, a decision that has resulted in broad support for the legislation. Through the years, 343 elected officials, 180 businesses, and 222 stakeholders and organizations have pledged their support for Wild

Sky Wilderness (WWC N.d., “Wild Sky Wilderness Supporters”). Considering this far-reaching support, Wild Sky is a model wilderness proposal. However, it should not serve as a standard whereby a quota of public support is established. Rather, every effort should be made to make sure that citizens – locally and regionally – are encouraged to actively participate in the proposal process.

A federal land use decision with local ramifications, wilderness designation is a value judgment, prioritizing one set of uses over others. Unlike past designations, when the lead actors were wilderness advocates and the timber industry, today’s opposition is more diverse, including snowmobilers, property rights advocates, off-road vehicle enthusiasts, and people who generally don’t trust big government. Wilderness designation is no longer a case of trading low elevation forests for high elevation vistas, it is a decision that determines which citizen groups will be allowed access to which areas.

In reality, access is not an issue with Wild Sky. Snowmobilers do not significantly use any of the land within the negotiated boundaries. Aside from the winter, when snow-covered roads provide sufficient challenges for jeeps and souped-up trucks, off-road vehicles have little interest in the Skykomish Ranger District. In this way, Wild Sky displaces very little recreational activity. However, these motorized recreation organizations are fearful that including its abandoned roads, culverts, and historic dams will set a precedent, leading to establishing wilderness in other non-pristine areas where they do ride. Wild Sky does not set a new precedent – there are many other examples of wilderness areas regionally and nationally where wilderness areas have been established in previously roaded, settled, and logged areas and where these signs of previous human trammels are being replaced by nature’s resilience.

Of the many arguments both for and against Wild Sky, everyone stands strong by his or her position. In every interview, I asked participants about their initial reaction to Wild Sky and how their opinion has changed over time. Not a single person, whether a proponent or opponent, changed their mind. Each side critiques the other for not understanding what wilderness is all about, and not making the effort to become educated in order to make a more informed decision. During the lengthy designation process, Wild Sky's staunchest opponents and proponents have learned much about wilderness, but no one's opinion has been swayed.

Wilderness is often about political compromise, but no individual or organization is prepared to compromise their core values. As Doug Scott writes, "Few of us are willing to defer to the righteously emphatic assertions of those with whom we contend in political debates. Compromise can be altogether honorable, so long as one remains true to fundamentals" (Scott 2004, 117). No one I spoke with is anti-wilderness; this sentiment is impossible in a societal norm that protects the environment and loves trees. However, Wild Sky's opponents are in favor of limiting the momentum of the wilderness movement, increasing public and local involvement, and preserving motorized access to the *de facto* wildernesses where they already recreate. These core values cannot be compromised any more than advocates' strongly held beliefs in environmental protection and "the wilderness experience."

The future of Wild Sky will be decided by politics, pivoting on the boundary and regulation negotiations already made and Congressional horse trades yet to be made. The proposal began locally, with the idea that wilderness designation may benefit local economies, but grew to be a statewide campaign with support from Washington's federal

Congressional delegation. The proposal has lofty promises for environmental protection, economic stimulus, and recreational opportunities, but these each have their own costs – time commitments and financial investments in the forests and communities where wilderness is preserved. The wilderness community and the federal government must commit to rallying around these causes for the long-term. From the infant stages of wilderness proposals into the future, this process must be a collaboration between wilderness advocates, local communities, and the Forest Service.

In the case of Wild Sky, there will be many parties affected – the people whose families have lived for generations in the Skykomish valley, recreational outfitters, visitors, non-governmental organizations, politicians, valley businesses, and even the forests and rivers themselves. The land preservation and development limitations inherent on U.S. Forest Service lands, especially in the narrow Skykomish River valley, help to preserve local communities’ rural character and culture, but these factors are often overshadowed by a strained economy. Skykomish and Index have watched as Wellington, Scenic, and Alpine have all gone from heyday railroad and tourist centers to ghost towns, and Skykomish’s population continues to decline. An on-line encyclopedia of Washington State History concludes its piece about Skykomish saying, “Tucked up into the corner of the county and surrounded by mountains, Skykomish thrives as a functioning museum piece of twentieth century history” (Stein 1999). Perhaps the future of the upper Sky Valley towns holds more than this, and maybe that future is in wilderness, but only if the promises wrapped up in Wild Sky’s long-term wilderness preservation are matched by promises of long-term investment in and government collaboration with these communities.

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Personal Communications

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- Anonymous. USFS. 29-31 January 2008. Three employees in the Skykomish Ranger District. Skykomish, Index, and Everett, WA
- Brown, Charlie. 31 January 2008. Skykomish resident and co-owner of the Whistling Post Tavern. Skykomish, WA.
- Cameron, Dave and Bob Hubbard. 30 January 2008. Index residents and local historians. Index, WA.
- Clapp, Mick. 30 January 2008. Member of the Dirty 13 4x4 Jeep Club. Monroe, WA.
- Davis, Tom. 31 January 2008. Trails Coordinator, Skykomish Ranger District. Skykomish, WA.
- Engber, John. 25 January 2008. Senator Murray's State Director. Seattle, WA.
- Fadden, Chris. 28 January 2008. Member of the Washington State Snowmobile Association. Monroe, WA.
- Halley, Mark. 24 January 2008. Member of the Boeing 4x4 Club and President of Reiter Trails Watch Organization. Seattle, WA.
- Hunter, Kem. 29 January 2008. Index resident and former mayor. Index, WA.
- Husmann, Ed. 26 January 2008. Snohomish County Farm Board member and Sultan resident. Sultan, WA.
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- Paull, Gary. 28 February 2008. Wilderness and Trails Coordinator, Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Everett, WA.
- Scott, Doug. 3 February 2008. Policy Director, Campaign for America's Wilderness. Seattle, WA.

Somers, Dave. 28 January 2008. Snohomish County Councilmember. Everett, WA.

Town, Mike. 23 January 2008. President, Friends of Wild Sky. Redmond, WA.

Uniack, Tom. 23 January 2008. Conservation Director, Washington Wilderness Coalition. Seattle, WA.