



# United States Department of the Interior

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## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

North Cascades National Park

2105 Highway 20

Sedro Woolley, Washington 98284 - 1799

IN REPLY REFER TO:

L7427

February 22, 1989

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Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Pacific Northwest Region

From: Superintendent, North Cascades National Park  
Service Complex

Subject: Wild and Scenic River Candidates

The following streams meet the criteria for consideration for Wild and Scenic River designation:

- Chilliwack River
- Skagit River
- Thunder Creek/Fisher Creek
- Ruby Creek/Granite Creek/Canyon Creek
- Stehekin River/Agnes Creek/Bridge Creek
- North Fork Nooksack River
- Baker River

*Big Beaver Creek*

Chilliwack River - The Chilliwack River, in the northwest corner of North Cascades National Park (NOCA) flows north into British Columbia. Within NOCA the river is also within designated Wilderness. It flows through a wild part of the park and is bordered by spectacular stands of old red cedar.

Skagit River - The Skagit River in the Ross Lake National Recreation Area (ROLA) is downstream from the Seattle City Light hydroelectric projects. River levels are regulated by the dams. An additional project (Copper Creek) has been proposed in this currently unimpeded section. Most of this section of the river is parallel to Highway 20 and is used for recreational rafting. The river is also an important feeding area for wintering bald eagles utilizing salmon carcasses. Outside ROLA the river has been designated Wild and Scenic and is managed by the U.S. Forest Service. The river is an outstanding scenic resource easily viewed by visitors traveling through the area on the highway.

Thunder Creek/Fisher Creek - These streams originate in NOCA and flow north into ROLA, to Diablo Lake. The City of Seattle has proposed a dam on Thunder Creek within ROLA. The valleys associated with the streams are outstanding natural areas ranging from broad U-shaped valleys with extensive marshy areas to narrow V-shaped canyons.

Wild and Scenic River Evaluation  
North Cascades National Park Service Complex

SKAGIT RIVER

Identification

This section of the Skagit River is within the Ross Lake National Recreation Area in Whatcom and Skagit counties.

Evaluation

General Setting: The Skagit River originates in British Columbia and flows south and west to the Puget Sound. The section of river being considered here is downstream from the Seattle City Light hydroelectric projects (Ross, Diablo, and Gorge dams) and river levels are regulated by the dams. Most of this section of the river is parallel to Highway 20 and receives low to moderate use for recreational rafting. The river is also an important feeding area for wintering bald eagles utilizing salmon carcasses. Outside the Ross Lake National Recreation Area the river has been designated under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and is managed by the U.S. Forest Service. The river is an important scenic resource, easily viewed by visitors traveling through the area on the highway.

Elizibility Determination

Scenic: Visitors are afforded views of heavily forested slopes and snow fields. Much of the river is paralleled by State Route 20 and high voltage electric transmission lines.  
Average.

Recreational: There are numerous pullouts along the highway. The river is also used for white water raft trips. Above average.

Geologic: This is a low to moderate gradient stretch of the river with some rapids. There has been limited talc mining in several areas adjacent to the river. Also, gravel removal adjacent to the river has resulted in several ponds that are important wildlife areas. Above Average.

Fish & Wildlife: The Skagit River supports a diverse fishery population including resident and anadromous species. There are 5 species of salmon and at least 7 other species present. Osprey nest along the river and Bald Eagles are present during the winter months. Various mammals are present in the area including mink, marten, river otter, beaver, black bear, mule deer, and cougar. Gray wolf and grizzly bear may be present. Outstandingly Remarkable.

Historical: There is some evidence of old mining operations along the river. There is also evidence of the old railroad grade associated with the construction of the hydroelectric

facilities on the Skagit. Above Average.

Cultural: The area was used by Native Americans. Average.

Comment: An additional hydroelectric project (Copper Creek) has been proposed by Seattle City Light in this currently unimpeded section. This was deferred in the early 1980's partly because of an earthquake fault in the area.

REPORT OF ELIGIBILITY/INELIGIBILITY FINDINGS

**State:** Washington

**Park:** North Cascades National Park Complex

**River:** Skagit River

**A. Length of River Within Park:** 12 miles

**B. Eligible Mileage Within Park:** 12 miles

**C. Status of Adjacent Segments:** Downstream segment is a designated Wild and Scenic River.

**D. Classification:** Scenic and Recreational

**E. Outstandingly Remarkable Values:** See attached

**F. Project Proposals:** None known

**G. Inholdings Along River:** Seattle City Light Owns Approx. 15% of Frontage

**H. Percentage of Watershed Within Park:** 15%

**I. Videotape Coverage:** No

**J. Other Relevant Information:**

Wild and Scenic River Evaluation  
North Cascades National Park Service Complex

THUNDER CREEK/FISHER CREEK

Identification

These streams originate from glaciers in North Cascades National Park and flow north to Diablo Lake in the Ross Lake National Recreation Area.

Evaluation

General Setting: The valleys associated with the streams are outstanding natural areas ranging from broad U-shaped valleys with extensive marshy areas to narrow V-shaped canyons. Both valleys have maintained trails with significant visitor use. There was considerable mineral exploration and some development in the Thunder Creek drainage around the turn of the century. The remains of this activity is important to the history of the area.

Eligibility Determination

Scenic: The area provides views of high mountains, rugged peaks, glaciers, water falls, old growth forest, and a pristine stream valley. Outstandingly Remarkable.

Recreational: A backcountry trail and several backcountry camps are located along Thunder and Fisher creeks. Outstandingly Remarkable.

Geologic: These are deep valleys surrounded by high ridges and peaks. There are several active glaciers at the headwaters. Outstandingly Remarkable.

Fish & Wildlife: There is an active Osprey nest along Thunder Creek. Portions of the drainage may provide good grizzly bear habitat (the last confirmed grizzly bear in this area was killed in Fisher Basin in 1964) as well as habitat for the gray wolf.

Historical: There are several historic mines, cabins, and trails in the upper Thunder drainage. Above Average.

Cultural: The area was used by Native Americans. Average.

Comment: The City of Seattle has proposed a dam on Thunder Creek within the Ross Lake National Recreation Area.

REPORT OF ELIGIBILITY/INELIGIBILITY FINDINGS

State: Washington

Park: North Cascades National Park Complex

River: Thunder and Fisher Creeks

A. Length of River Within Park: 25 miles

B. Eligible Mileage Within Park: 25 miles

C. Status of Adjacent Segments: Entirely within Park.

D. Classification: Wild

E. Outstandingly Remarkable Values: See attached

F. Project Proposals: None known

G. Inholdings Along River: None

H. Percentage of Watershed Within Park: 100%

I. Videotape Coverage: No

J. Other Relevant Information:

Wild and Scenic River Evaluation  
North Cascades National Park Service Complex

RUBY CREEK/GRANITE CREEK/CANYON CREEK

Identification

These streams are primarily on U.S. Forest Service land except for approximately 2 miles of Ruby Creek in the Ross Lake National Recreation Area before it empties into Ross Lake. The section within the Ross Lake National Recreation Area is also within the boundary of the Seattle City Light Skagit River Project, FERC No. 553.

Evaluation

General Setting: Portions of these streams parallel highway 20 and provide spectacular views of high mountain streams. The Okanogan National Forest is currently considering the streams for Wild and Scenic status. However, it is our understanding that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license for project 553 (Seattle City Light Skagit River projects including Ross Lake) precludes designation of this section of Ruby Creek as Wild and Scenic. Although Ruby Creek appears to meet the criteria for consideration as Wild and Scenic, there is no indication on the part of the licensee that the project boundary will be revised.

Eligibility Determination

Scenic: This is a rapid flowing mountain stream parallel to highway 20. Above Average

Recreational: The stream is crossed and paralleled by the Eastbank Trail in the Ross Lake National Recreation Area. Average

Geologic: There are numerous examples of mining "prospects". Average

Fish & Wildlife: The lower reach provides valuable spawning habitat and is closed to fishing to allow natural reproduction of Ross Lake trout. The area is potential habitat for the gray wolf and the grizzly bear. Above Average

Historical: There are numerous examples of mining "prospects". Average

Cultural: The area was used by Native Americans. Average.

REPORT OF ELIGIBILITY/INELIGIBILITY FINDINGS

State: Washington

Park: North Cascades National Park Complex

River: Ruby, Granite, and Canyon Creeks

A. Length of River Within Park: 2 miles

B. Eligible Mileage Within Park: 2 miles

C. Status of Adjacent Segments: Upstream segments found eligible by USFS.

D. Classification: Wild and Scenic

E. Outstandingly Remarkable Values: See attached

F. Project Proposals: None known

G. Inholdings Along River: None

H. Percentage of Watershed Within Park: 10%

I. Videotape Coverage: No

J. Other Relevant Information:



Wild and Scenic River Evaluation  
North Cascades National Park Service Complex

STEHEKIN RIVER/AGNES CREEK/BRIDGE CREEK

Identification

The Stehekin River originates in North Cascades National Park near Cascade Pass at about 5400 feet. The river flows through the park for approximately 18 miles, then for approximately 12 miles through the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area before entering Lake Chelan at 1100 feet. Associated with the Stehekin River are Agnes and Bridge creeks. Agnes Creek enters from the west out of the Glacier Peak Wilderness and Bridge Creek originates on the east in the Okanogan National Forest.

Evaluation

General Setting: This is a spectacular system, originating in glaciers and snowfields. The streams pass through varied topography ranging from broad gentle valleys to narrow impenetrable gorges. The portion of the river within the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area runs parallel to the road in many areas. It also crosses or is bordered by private land in many locations. There is some recreational rafting use of this portion of the river. Total length of the system is approximately 44 miles.

Eligibility Determination

Scenic: The river flows through spectacular areas ranging from subalpine to dense forest. Outstandingly Remarkable.

Recreational: Activities include fishing, hiking, rafting, sightseeing including wildlife observation. Outstandingly Remarkable.

Geologic: The river originates in glaciers and perpetual snow fields and flows through a variety of topography from steep, near vertical slopes, rocky gorges, to broad valleys. Outstandingly Remarkable.

Fish & Wildlife: Important spawning habitat plus habitat for various wildlife species. There are significant areas of potential habitat for the grizzly bear and the gray wolf. Outstandingly Remarkable.

Historical: Mine to market road, old wagon road, mining prospects, homesteads. Outstandingly Remarkable.

Cultural: There are examples of modern and historic land uses in addition to significant visitor use. The area was used by Native Americans. Outstandingly Remarkable.

REPORT OF ELIGIBILITY/INELIGIBILITY FINDINGS

State: Washington

Park: North Cascades National Park Complex

River: Stehekin River (with Agnes and Bridge Creeks)

- A. Length of River Within Park: 44 miles
- B. Eligible Mileage Within Park: 44 miles
- C. Status of Adjacent Segments: No federal studies.
- D. Classification: Scenic and Recreational
- E. Outstandingly Remarkable Values: See attached
- F. Project Proposals: None known
- G. ~~Inholdings~~ Along River: Many; total 10 - 15% frontage
- H. Percentage of Watershed Within Park: 85%
- I. Videotape Coverage: No
- J. Other Relevant Information:

Wild and Scenic River Evaluation  
North Cascades National Park Service Complex

NORTH FORK NOOKSACK RIVER

Identification

This river originates on the north side of Mount Shuksan from the Nooksack Glacier in North Cascades National Park.

Evaluation

General Setting: Only about 2 miles are within the park boundary, however, here the river flows through the spectacular Nooksack Cirque. The river is being considered for Wild and Scenic status on the adjacent Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest.

Eligibility Determination

Scenic: The Nooksack Cirque is an outstanding example of a glacial cirque. Outstandingly Remarkable.

Recreational: Hiking and climbing are popular recreation activities in this area. Outstandingly Remarkable.

Geologic: The Nooksack Cirque is an outstanding example of a glacial cirque and includes examples of active glaciers. Outstandingly Remarkable.

Fish & Wildlife: This wild, undeveloped area provides potential habitat for numerous species including the grizzly bear and the gray wolf. Outstanding Remarkable.

Historical: Some minor mineral exploration may have taken place here. Average.

Cultural: The area received use by Native Americans. Above Average.

REPORT OF ELIGIBILITY/INELIGIBILITY FINDINGS

State: Washington

Park: North Cascades National Park Complex

River: North Fork of the Nooksack River

A. Length of River Within Park: 2 miles

B. Eligible Mileage Within Park: 2 miles

C. Status of Adjacent Segments: Downstream segment found eligible and recommended for designation by USFS.

D. Classification: Wild

E. Outstandingly Remarkable Values: See attached

F. Project Proposals: None known

G. Inholdings Along River: None

H. Percentage of Watershed Within Park: 5%

I. Videotape Coverage: Yes

J. Other Relevant Information:

Wild and Scenic River Evaluation  
North Cascades National Park Service Complex

BAKER RIVER

Identification

The Baker river originates in North Cascades National Park and approximately 10 miles of the stream are within the park. Outside the park boundary the river empties into Baker Lake.

Evaluation

General Setting: This is a particularly wild region of the park with no maintained trails. The river is being considered for Wild and Scenic status on the adjacent Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest.

Elizibility Determination

Scenic: This area provides views of Mount Shuksan, forested slopes, old growth forest and an unimpaired mountain stream valley. Outstandingly Remarkable.

Recreational: This is an untrailed valley that provides an excellent example of an untrampled area. Above Average.

Geologic: The river is fed from glaciers and perpetual snow fields on Mount Shuksan and the Pickett Range. Outstandingly Remarkable.

Fish & Wildlife: This wild, undeveloped area provides potential habitat for numerous species including the grizzly bear and the gray wolf. Outstanding Remarkable.

Historical: There was minor activity in the river valley by early explorers and prospectors. Average.

Cultural: The area was used by Native Americans. Average.

REPORT OF ELIGIBILITY/INELIGIBILITY FINDINGS

State: Washington

Park: North Cascades National Park Complex

River: Baker River

A. Length of River Within Park: 10 miles

B. Eligible Mileage Within Park: 10 miles

C. Status of Adjacent Segments: Downstream segment found eligible and recommended for designation by USFS.

D. Classification: Wild

E. Outstandingly Remarkable Values: See attached

F. Project Proposals: None known

G. Inholdings Along River: None

H. Percentage of Watershed Within Park: 90%

I. Videotape Coverage: No

J. Other Relevant Information:

Wild and Scenic River Evaluation  
North Cascades National Park Service Complex

CHILLIWACK RIVER

Identification

The Chilliwack River, in the northwest corner of North Cascades National Park flows north into British Columbia. Within the park the river is also within designated Wilderness.

Evaluation

General Setting: The Chilliwack River flows through a wild part of the park and is bordered by stands of virgin western red cedar and spectacular ridges, peaks, perpetual snow fields and glaciers. A maintained trail parallels much of the river and provides a connection to other trails in the park as well as the entry point to various climbing routes.

Eligibility Determination

Scenic: A maintained backcountry trail follows much of the river. The trail offers spectacular views of adjacent high country including mountain peaks, glaciers, forested slopes and the natural river course and old growth forests.  
Outstandingly Remarkable. /

Recreational: A maintained trail follows much of the river. There is significant visitor use here and in the surrounding area. Outstandingly Remarkable. /

Geologic: This is an active stream that varies from very steep gradient with falls and cascades to gentle meanders in the valley bottom. Outstandingly Remarkable. /

Fish & Wildlife: The river supports a variety of native fish species including Dolly Varden, and rainbow trout, and anadromous sockeye salmon. The valley provides diverse wildlife habitat including extensive old growth Douglas-fir and western hemlock; potentially extensive Spotted Owl habitat. Other important bird species include Osprey, Pileated Woodpecker, Three-toed Woodpecker, and probably Great Gray Owl. Important mammals are mink, marten, river otter, beaver, cougar, mule deer, and possibly gray wolf and grizzly bear. Outstandingly Remarkable. /

Historical: There was early use of the valley by prospectors and surveyors of the international boundary.  
Above Average.

Cultural: Used by Native Americans. Above Average.

REPORT OF ELIGIBILITY/INELIGIBILITY FINDINGS

State: Washington

Park: North Cascades National Park Complex

River: Chilliwack River

- A. Length of River Within Park: 15 miles
- B. Eligible Mileage Within Park: ~~15~~ miles /
- C. Status of Adjacent Segments: Flows into Canada
- D. Classification: Wild
- E. Outstandingly Remarkable Values: See attached
- F. Project Proposals: None known
- G. Inholdings Along River: None
- H. Percentage of Watershed Within Park: 10%
- I. Videotape Coverage: No
- J. Other Relevant Information:



Wild and Scenic River Evaluation  
North Cascades National Park Service Complex

BIG BEAVER CREEK

Identification

Evaluation

General Setting: Big Beaver Creek originates on the East side of the Pickett Range in North Cascades National Park and flows east into Ross Lake in the Ross Lake National Recreation Area. Within the park the creek is also within designated Wilderness. The lower portion of the creek flows through a broad valley with spectacular stands of virgin western red cedar.

Eligibility Determination

Scenic: A maintained backcountry trail follows much of the lower portion of the creek. The trail offers spectacular views of adjacent high country including mountain peaks, forested slopes, and the natural stream course with numerous beaver ponds, and old growth forests. Outstandingly Remarkable.

Recreational: A maintained trail follows much of the lower portion of the creek. There is significant visitor use here and in the surrounding area. Outstandingly Remarkable.

Geologic: This is an active stream that varies from very steep gradient with falls and cascades to gentle meanders in the valley bottom. Outstandingly Remarkable.

Fish & Wildlife: The valley provides diverse wildlife habitat including extensive old growth Douglas-fir, western hemlock, and western red cedar; potentially extensive Spotted Owl habitat. This valley has excellent potential for Peregrine Falcon habitat due to the large cliffs and outstanding prey availability. Important mammals are mink, marten, river otter, beaver, cougar, mule deer, black bear, and possibly gray wolf and grizzly bear. Outstandingly Remarkable.

Historical: There was early use of the valley by prospectors, explorers, and trappers. Above Average.

Cultural: The area received significant use by Native Americans. Above Average.

REPORT OF ELIGIBILITY/INELIGIBILITY FINDINGS

State: Washington

Park: North Cascades National Park Complex

River: Big Beaver Creek

A. Length of River Within Park: 13 miles ✓

B. Eligible Mileage Within Park: 13 miles ✓

C. Status of Adjacent Segments: Entirely within Park

D. Classification: Wild

E. Outstandingly Remarkable Values: See attached

F. Project Proposals: None known

G. Inholdings Along River: None

H. Percentage of Watershed Within Park: 100%

I. Videotape Coverage: No

J. Other Relevant Information: