



"First Light." Watercolor courtesy of Molly Hashimoto.

WELCOME

Y*ou are now in the Scope of the GMP/EIS Chapter. Here are the topics you can read about:*

Planning Issues and Concerns

Issues and Concerns Not Addressed

Impact Topics: Resources and Values at Stake in the Planning Process

Relationship to Other Planning

CHAPTER 3: SCOPE OF THE GMP/EIS

As a major policy document for Ross Lake National Recreation Area, this general management plan is the proper forum for addressing significant issues related to management of Ross Lake NRA. Decisions that must be made in the plan are related to determining what activities and uses are appropriate in Ross Lake NRA. In some cases these decisions will affect the amount of visitor use and the types of visitor experiences, NPS operations, and land uses within Ross Lake NRA. In other cases, the exact amount and the conditions for particular uses will be determined in future implementation plans. This general management plan is a programmatic document that provides conceptual guidance to NPS managers as well as more detailed strategies and actions where appropriate. Subsequent implementation plans will focus on how to implement an activity or project called for by this general management plan. Implementation plans will include more extensive details and analyses than this general management plan.

The National Park Service requires that general management plans determine whether park boundaries are adequate for protecting resources or whether they need to be adjusted. Recommendations have been made about boundary adjustments throughout this planning process. However, adjacent areas are generally protected by other public agencies, so this document specifies which areas should be the focus of detailed boundary analysis to be undertaken as part of this general management planning effort.

The scope of the plan also determines the scope of the environmental impact analysis. The final sections of this chapter discuss which impact topics will be analyzed and which have been dismissed because there will be no impacts.

PLANNING ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Interested members of the public, National Park Service staff, and representatives from other agencies and organizations identified various issues and concerns about Ross Lake National Recreation Area during the general management plan scoping process. This information assisted in determining the scope or range of issues to be addressed by this ~~draft~~ **final** general management plan.

The following issues describe specific needs or challenges that are addressed in this general management plan and environmental impact statement. The alternatives provide strategies for addressing these issues within the context of Ross Lake NRA's purpose, significance, and special mandates.

Natural Resource Issues

- Invasive species, including floral and faunal species, have been introduced throughout the Ross Lake NRA unit and are affecting natural conditions throughout the North Cascades NPS Complex. Affected resources and areas include fisheries, riparian areas, reservoir shorelines, and road and trail corridors. The GMP can identify strategies and suggest further planning to address invasive species within Ross Lake NRA.
- There are a variety of wildlife and fishery issues facing Ross Lake NRA including rare species, non-native species, and potential hunting and sport-fishing issues. This GMP explores strategies to address these wildlife and fishery issues.
- The Skagit River is a designated a wild and scenic river managed by the U.S. Forest Service from the boundary of Ross Lake NRA to Sedro-Woolley. The Skagit River is freeflowing for 11 miles within Ross Lake NRA from the boundary to Gorge Powerhouse in Newhalem. Dozens of creeks and tributaries feed water into the Skagit River from the glaciers within the complex and peaks and crests of the watershed. In 1989, a draft report found that several river and creek segments were eligible for wild and scenic river designation. This GMP planning process provides an opportunity to update the eligibility study and conduct a wild and scenic river suitability study of the Skagit River and tributaries within Ross Lake NRA.

Dynamic Landscape Conditions

- Climate change and global warming pose large-scale, irreversible and imminent threats to maintaining a stable ecosystem within the North Cascades NPS Complex. While the impacts are still being analyzed and modeled, it is clear that climate change has and will continue to dramatically impact resources within the Ross Lake NRA, including fisheries, plant and wildlife communities, water resources, old-growth forests, and high elevation meadows. Climate change will affect ecosystem processes, such as hydrologic processes, fires, floods, and avalanches which impact natural and cultural resources, operations and infrastructure, and visitor use and experience. Climate change could also dramatically affect reservoir water levels, and therefore is likely to alter how Seattle City Light operates the Skagit River Hydroelectric Project to optimize generation and meet recreation, fisheries, and flood control obligations. These changes may affect Seattle City Light's power generation capability as well as reservoir-based visitor recreation. Comprehensive planning provides an opportunity to address these changing conditions, as well as how the NPS can reduce emissions both from NPS operations and visitors.
- Natural ecosystem functions and processes such as floods, avalanches, landslides, river and creek channel avulsions, severe weather events, and fire result in a constantly changing and dynamic landscape. While these natural functions and processes are allowed to occur mostly unimpeded in the remote and wilderness areas, this is not necessarily true in the more developed areas along the North Cascades Highway corridor. These natural functions and processes have and will continue to affect facilities and operations within Ross Lake NRA. These issues need to be addressed in a strategic and open planning process to provide guidance and informed responses to destroyed facilities and the location of potential future facilities.

Cultural Resources Issues

- While generally thought of as a wilderness and natural resource area, Ross Lake NRA also contains significant archeological and

historic resources related to early human use of the Skagit watershed. These resources include submerged archeological sites that are exposed during the drawdown of the reservoirs, prehistoric resource extraction and use sites, and early mining and homesteading sites. The GMP offers an opportunity to guide stewardship and interpretation of these cultural resources.

- The "Skagit River and Newhalem Creek Hydroelectric Project" Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It includes parts of the towns of Newhalem and Diablo, the Gorge, Diablo, and Ross Powerplant Complexes, Ladder Creek Gardens, and Diablo Powerplant Complex a number of houses and other buildings built between 1917 and 1960. Under the relicensing agreement, the City of Seattle must evaluate their buildings and structures for historic significance and update the National Register nomination on a regular schedule. Seattle City Light is currently evaluating additional sites for National Register eligibility, including Ross Dam and powerhouse and the Hollywood housing district in Diablo Townsite. The GMP could identify mechanisms for future management that comply with NPS standards.

Wilderness Issues

- The Stephen Mather Wilderness encompasses 94% percent of the North Cascades NPS Complex and is the unifying designation that crosses the unit boundaries within the complex. Though the wilderness designation is a unifying feature of the complex, visitor use regulations differ amongst the North Cascades National Park and Ross Lake NRA, such as allowing hunting in Ross Lake NRA. Within Ross Lake NRA, approximately 69% percent is designated wilderness and 4% percent is potential wilderness. General guidance for the management of wilderness and minimization of impacts within Ross Lake NRA wilderness is needed. This will allow the NPS to provide more detailed management prescriptions for the future revision of the North Cascades NPS Complex 1989 Wilderness Management Plan.
- The Big Beaver and Thunder Creek corridors are in the designated potential wilderness areas. Zoning strategies that ensure the

protection of these areas to retain their wilderness character need consideration within a planning and NEPA framework. Additionally, the GMP will consider the possibility of converting potential wilderness to designated wilderness.

Recreation Issues

- An expected result of the GMP is that it will provide clear guidance for management of visitor use within Ross Lake NRA, including developing management alternatives that will address competing or conflicting visitor activities and user groups. This includes direction on hunting and fishing activities, commercial group use, scenic overflights, private seaplane use, climbing activities, seasonal use, use of the drawdown, stock use, extreme sports, and emerging uses, such as new climbing techniques. The GMP must also consider water-based uses, and various types of motorized vehicles, such as motor boats and seaplanes.
- The reservation and permit system for visitor use in the North Cascades NPS Complex is by personal interaction between visitors and NPS staff as well as an online reservation system for frontcountry overnight camping. The public has expressed a desire for more streamlined systems for acquiring reservations and permits for use in the complex. The GMP will consider alternative methods for organizing and updating these systems.
- Overflights by recreational, commercial, and military planes could be addressed in the GMP.
- The public expressed a desire for additional day-hiking opportunities within Ross Lake NRA. The trail system will be evaluated to potentially identify new trails as well as trails that could be removed.

Interpretation/Education Issues

- Recent studies have shown that youth are increasingly disconnected with the outdoors and nature. An important goal of the NPS is to engage youth and the public with our national treasures, in this case the resources of the North Cascades. Most of the interpretive and educational programs occur

within the developed core of the complex in Ross Lake NRA at the visitor center, North Cascades Environmental Learning Center, and in the frontcountry areas of the park. New strategies and approaches for reaching youth and diverse audiences will be considered in the GMP. This will include providing information to visitors remotely and/or before they arrive in Ross Lake NRA.

- There is increasing awareness of the need for the NPS to improve the communication of science information to the public, land managers, and internally and externally to the research community. As natural and cultural resource research and monitoring efforts increase in the North Cascades, staff will be expected to fulfill these science communication needs in various formats, and to a wide range of audiences, as a means of better fulfilling the role of protection of resources through improved education.
- The GMP process provides an opportunity to develop and evaluate interpretive themes for Ross Lake NRA within the context of connecting the unit's resources to relevant ideas, meanings, concepts, contexts, beliefs, and values. The interpretive themes are based upon a unit's purpose and significance. They will provide the foundation on which the unit's educational and interpretive programs are based.

Transportation, Access, and Circulation Issues

- Many of the campsites on Diablo and Ross Lake are boat-in and walk-in sites, which limit the numbers and types of visitors that



The NPS provides support services to the North Cascades Institute Environmental Learning Center, whose campus is located within Ross Lake NRA.

can access these sites. There is one operating commercial water taxi on Ross Lake which is in high demand during the summer months. It provides transport for visitors to remote up-lake campsites and trailheads. The GMP may explore other commercial services on Ross Lake for visitor boat transportation.

- The Washington State Department of Transportation owns and maintains Highway 20, the North Cascades Highway, which passes through Ross Lake NRA and links the east and west sides of the North Cascades. The GMP will consider how management and operations related to the North Cascades Highway can be improved through better communication with the Washington Department of Transportation. Issues include traveler safety, road hazards, avalanche control, and winter use.
- The North Cascades Highway is a popular motorcycle touring route. Increased motorcycle traffic, excessive motorcycle speeds, and noise are concerns that have been expressed by the public, and the GMP can consider management alternatives to address this use and its effects on resources.
- At present, public transportation access to and within Ross Lake NRA does not exist. The GMP will consider management alternatives to include public transportation on the North Cascades Highway. Public

transportation, such as shuttle buses, may be considered during peak visitation as an alternative to increasing parking lots and could employ energy saving practices.

- Capacity at the Ross Dam Trailhead parking lot is overloaded during peak season. There may be an opportunity to provide additional parking spaces or to manage or design parking in such a way as to prevent exceeding parking capacity.
- There are closed and remnant roads in the system. Management alternatives could explore whether these roads should be re-opened, closed but maintained for an alternate use, or restored to natural conditions.

User Capacity Issues

- Visitor capacity has not been comprehensively analyzed for Ross Lake NRA. The GMP provides an opportunity to more clearly understand visitor use, perspectives, and desires within Ross Lake NRA and the North Cascades NPS Complex. The GMP will provide clear guidance for management of visitor capacity within Ross Lake NRA.

Facilities Issues

- Ross Lake Resort is filled to capacity throughout its season of operation. The GMP needs to consider the visitor demand, future demand, and the capacity of infrastructure and facilities at Ross Lake Resort.
- Campground management and infrastructure in the frontcountry auto-accessible sites may need to be improved. The public has expressed a desire for additional services at the campgrounds, including showers, additional bathrooms, group sites, and other types of accommodation other than camping.
- Staff housing is limited and is an issue that needs to be addressed in the GMP. Staff housing is most needed during the summer for seasonal employees both working in the frontcountry and backcountry areas of the complex.
- There is a concern that development of additional facilities on Ross Lake may change its existing character. The staff and public want to ensure that the character of the lake is not diminished by additional facilities.



Ross Dam Trailhead parking lot on a busy summer day. Passenger vehicles mix with horse trailers and administrative uses.

- The Wilderness Information Center at Marblemount provides essential public and operational functions. The GMP needs to consider alternatives that address facility design, location, and accessibility for public use.
- The Hozomeen Ranger Station is an A-frame structure in poor condition. It is seasonally staffed to provide basic visitor orientation information. The GMP needs to consider alternatives that address this facility's design and capacity.
- In the event that existing campgrounds are destroyed by catastrophic events, the NPS needs to consider alternative locations for potential replacement camping areas. The topography of the North Cascades features steep walled valleys that result in few buildable locations within the Ross Lake NRA that are outside of geohazard areas. These buildable locations need to be identified for potential future construction.

Boundary Issues

- There is currently a patchwork of NPS and Seattle City Light land ownership along the North Cascades Highway corridor that should be considered in the GMP. This patchwork of ownership contributes to operational, resource preservation, and visitor use issues. The NPS could enter into discussions with Seattle City Light about boundary adjustments to address these issues.
- Diablo Townsite is located near the upper reaches of Gorge Lake near Stetattle Creek and close to the base of Diablo Dam. A significant feature about Diablo Townsite area is that it is one of the few relatively flat, geologically stable, and buildable locations in the North Cascades NPS Complex. It is composed of two distinct areas: Hollywood, owned by Seattle City Light, and Reflector Bar, owned by the National Park Service. Hollywood contains over 25 houses and was the primary residential area for Seattle City Light staff working at Diablo powerhouse and vicinity. The Reflector Bar area includes Diablo Powerhouse, a school building, maintenance buildings, and several houses. At one time, Diablo Townsite was a thriving community of Seattle City Light employees and their families who worked and lived in this isolated setting. Today, Diablo Townsite is

now used almost exclusively for hydroelectric power operations, and the majority of buildings, including the school and many of the houses, are now empty. The opportunity exists to develop new visions, future uses, and a new land ownership arrangement of Diablo Townsite.

International Boundary Issues

- There is the potential that the unpaved road from Hope, British Columbia to Hozomeen could be paved. This improved road access could significantly alter patterns of visitor use and the character of Ross Lake. The GMP should consider this possibility in its evaluation of cumulative impacts on the area. The GMP should also consider how to define desired conditions for Hozomeen and the character of the entry into the U.S. in conjunction with B.C. Parks, Canada.
- The NPS should consider collaborative planning with British Columbia Parks to discuss cross-border joint management for resource protection, forest health, and fires. There are currently conflicting regulations and operations between NPS and British Columbia Parks that should be discussed, including visitor uses, solid waste management, campground fees, garbage collection, firewood gathering, and potential future uses, such as helicopter guiding. Neighboring federal and state agencies will be consulted as part of the planning process.
- In cooperation with the U.S. Department of State, State of Washington, Canadian government, and Province of British Columbia, the GMP could explore the concept of establishing an international



View across Ross Lake into British Columbia.

park that joins B.C. Parks and the NPS while respecting existing jurisdictions. This designation could encourage cooperative management of the Skagit watershed and recreation. It could be modeled after other trans-border parks between Canada and the U.S.

- Natural Soundscapes
- Water Quality
- Hydrologic Systems, including Surface Hydrology, Wetlands and Floodplains
- Geological Resources and Processes, including Soils
- Vegetation
- Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat
- Aquatic Organisms
- Special Status Species
- Cultural Resources
- Archeological Resources
- Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes
- Tribal Issues and Ethnohistory
- Museum Collections
- Wilderness Character
- Visitation
- Visitor Opportunities
- Recreation Opportunities
- Interpretation and Education Opportunities
- Visitor Services
- Visitor Facilities
- Access and Transportation
- Socioeconomic Environment
- NPS Management and Operations

ISSUES AND CONCERNS NOT ADDRESSED

Not all of the issues or concerns raised by the public are included in this general management plan. Issues that were raised by the public were not considered if they are already prescribed by law, regulation, or policy; if they would be in violation of law, regulation, or policy; or if they were at a level that was too detailed for a general management plan and are more appropriately addressed in subsequent planning documents.

IMPACT TOPICS: RESOURCES AND VALUES AT STAKE IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

Impact topics allow comparison of the environmental consequences of implementing each alternative. These impact topics were identified based on federal laws and other legal requirements, the Council on Environmental Quality's guidelines for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act, NPS management policies, subject-matter expertise and knowledge of limited or easily impacted resources, and issues/concerns expressed by other agencies or members of the public during scoping. Impact topics were developed to focus the environmental analysis and to ensure that alternatives were evaluated against relevant topics. A brief rationale for the selection of the impact topics that will be analyzed in the environmental consequences chapter is given below, as well as a more detailed justification for dismissing other topics from further consideration.

Impact Topics to be Considered

The following impact topics will be retained for analysis due to the potential of management alternatives to affect these resources and values, either beneficially or adversely:

- Natural Resources
- Air Quality

Impact Topics Dismissed from Further Consideration

Some potential impact topics were considered and determined not relevant to the development of this general management plan for Ross Lake NRA because either implementing the alternatives would have no effect or a negligible effect on the topic or resource or the resource does not occur in the recreation area. The specific topics dismissed from further analysis are discussed below.

Energy Requirements and Conservation Potential

Alternatives in the general management plan, including the preferred alternative, could result in new facilities with inherent energy needs. In all of these alternatives, new facilities would be designed with long-term sustainability in mind. The National Park Service has adopted the concept of sustainable design as a guiding principle of facility planning and development (Management Policies 9.1.1.7). The objectives of sustainability are to design facilities to minimize adverse effects on natural and cultural values, to reflect their environmental setting, and to require the least amount of nonrenewable fuels and energy.

The action alternatives could result in an increased energy need, but this need is expected to be negligible when seen in a regional context. Thus, this topic is dismissed from further analysis.

Environmental Justice

On February 11, 1994, President William J. Clinton signed Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations.” This order requires all federal agencies to incorporate environmental justice into their missions by identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs/policies on minorities and low-income populations and communities. The Secretary of the Interior established Department of the Interior policy under this order in an August 17, 1994, memorandum. This memorandum directs all bureau and office heads to consider the impacts of their actions and inactions on minority and low-income populations and communities, to consider the equity of the distribution of benefits and risks of those decisions, and to ensure meaningful participation by minority and low-income populations in the department’s wide range of activities where health and safety are involved.

The Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Environmental Justice defines environmental justice as:

The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of

race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment means that no group of people, including racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies.

The goal of this “fair treatment” is not to shift risks among populations, but to identify potentially disproportionately high and adverse effects and identify alternatives that may mitigate these impacts. In responding to this executive order, two questions are asked and answered as the major part of the analysis:

1. Does the potentially affected community include minority and/or low-income populations?
2. Are the environmental impacts likely to fall disproportionately on minority and/or low-income members of the community and/or tribal resources?

Skagit and Whatcom counties contain both minority and low-income populations; however, environmental justice is dismissed as an impact topic for the following reasons:

- NPS staff and the planning team actively solicited public participation as part of the planning process and gave equal



Boaters exploring Diablo Lake.

consideration to all input from persons regardless of age, race, income status, or other socioeconomic or demographic factors.

- Implementation of the proposed alternative would not result in any identifiable adverse human health effects. Therefore, there would be no direct or indirect adverse effects on any minority or low-income population.
- The impacts associated with the preferred alternative would not result in any identified effects that would be specific to any minority or low-income population or community.
- NPS staff and the planning team have consulted and worked with the affected Native American tribes and will continue to do so in cooperative efforts to resolve any problems that may occur. In addition, the planning team did not identify any negative or adverse effects that would disproportionately and adversely affect the tribes.

Based on the above information and the requirements of Executive Order 12898, environmental justice was ruled out as an impact topic to be further evaluated in this document.

Indian Trust Lands

The National Park Service does not manage or administer Indian trust assets, nor are any lands comprising Ross Lake NRA held in trust by the Secretary of the Interior solely for the benefit of American Indians due to their status as American Indians. Therefore, this topic was dismissed from further analysis.

Natural or Depletable Resource Requirements and Conservation Potential

Consideration of these topics is required by 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1502.16. The National Park Service has adopted the concept of sustainable design as a guiding principle of facility planning and development (NPS Management Policies 9.1.1.7). The objectives of sustainability are to design facilities to minimize adverse effects on natural and cultural values, to reflect their environmental setting, and to maintain and encourage biodiversity, to operate and maintain facilities to promote their sustainability, and to demonstrate and promote conservation principles



Desolation Lookout.

and practices through sustainable design and ecologically sensitive use. Essentially, sustainability is the concept of living within the environment with the least impact on the environment.

None of the alternatives would substantially affect the park's energy requirements because any rehabilitated or new facilities would take advantage of energy conservation methods and materials. Through sustainable design concepts and other resource management principles, the alternatives analyzed in this document would attempt to conserve natural or depletable resources. However, some of the techniques that may be used to maintain road access in the floodplains or channel migration zones under some of the alternatives may not be sustainable and could result in impacts on hydrologic and riparian processes. Therefore, those topics are evaluated in this document under "Hydrologic Systems."

Night Sky

The National Park Service recognizes that the night sky over Ross Lake NRA is a feature that substantially contributes to the visitor experience. NPS policy requires the preservation, to the extent possible, of the natural lightscapes of parks and minimization of the intrusion of artificial light (light pollution) into the night scene (*NPS Management Policies 2006*, 4.10). The clarity of night skies is important both ecologically and for a positive visitor experience. Artificial light sources both in and outside the park can diminish night sky viewing opportunities.

Any new outdoor lighting installed as a result of implementing any of the alternatives in this document would be the minimum necessary for safety or security, and new lighting would be designed to prevent stray light from spreading into the sky. Because implementation of any of the alternatives in this document would not affect night sky viewing opportunities more than negligibly, this topic will not be analyzed further.

Prime or Unique Farmlands

In August 1980 the Council on Environmental Quality directed federal agencies to assess the effects of their actions on farmland soils classified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service as prime or unique. Prime farmland is defined as soil that produces general crops such as common foods, forage, fiber, and oil seed. Unique farmland soils produce specialty crops such as specific fruits, vegetables, and nuts.

According to the National Resource Conservation Service there are no unique farmlands in Ross Lake NRA. Private agriculture is not allowed in Ross Lake NRA, so this type of land use would not be affected by this plan. The prime farmlands are in the floodplains, and none of the alternatives propose development in the floodplains. Therefore, there would be no impacts on prime or unique farmlands, and the topic is being dismissed from further analysis in this document.

Urban Quality and Design of the Built Environment

Consideration of this topic is required by the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1502.16. The quality of urban areas is not a concern in this planning project. Throughout Ross Lake NRA, vernacular architecture and park-compatible design would be taken into consideration for new structures built under all of the action alternatives. Emphasis would be placed on designs and materials and colors that blend into and do not detract from the natural and built environment. Therefore, adverse impacts are anticipated to be negligible, and no further consideration of this topic is necessary.

Conformity with Local Land Use Plans

The fundamental land use of Ross Lake NRA and actions proposed in the alternatives would not be in conflict with any local, state, or tribal land use plans, policies, or controls for the area.

The creation of additional recreation and visitor service opportunities in Ross Lake NRA, as proposed in the alternatives, would be consistent with the existing land uses in Ross Lake NRA or local (non-NPS) land use plans. Therefore, this topic is dismissed from further consideration.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANNING

The following plans, agreements, and related documents have influenced the preparation of this general management plan, or may be modified based on the information in this general management plan. The following list is not all inclusive. Rather, it represents the plans most relevant to the management actions, issues, policies, and procedures addressed in this GMP.

National Park Service Plans

General Management Plan for the North Cascades National Park Complex

In June, 1988, the National Park Service finalized the *North Cascades NPS Complex General Management Plan* for North Cascades National Park, Ross Lake National Recreation Area, and Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. The plan addressed the entire North Cascades NPS Complex as per Congress' intent to manage the complex as a single natural ecosystem under one administration. The 1988 GMP currently provides direction for natural and cultural resources management, visitor use, and administrative activities for North Cascades National Park and Ross Lake NRA. Lake Chelan NRA is currently managed under a unit-specific plan finalized in 1995 as per a court order (see below). Upon completion of the Ross Lake NRA GMP, the 1988 General Management Plan guidance will be limited to North Cascades National Park.

General Management Plan for Lake Chelan NRA

The *Lake Chelan National Recreation Area General Management Plan* was finalized in June 1995. This plan provides management direction for visitor use, natural and cultural resources, development, and operation of Lake Chelan NRA according to the enabling legislation and other laws and regulations affecting management of the national recreation area. The Lake Chelan NRA GMP replaces those portions of the 1988 general management plan for North Cascades National Park, Ross Lake National Recreation Area, and Lake Chelan National Recreation Area that deal with Lake Chelan NRA. Preparation of this plan and environmental impact statement was required by and adheres to a consent decree that was approved by and entered in the United States District Court for the Western District of Washington on April 22, 1991. The consent decree resulted from a law suit filed by the North Cascades Conservation Council (Civil Case No. C-89-1342D). This plan and implementation plans that resulted from the environmental impact statement guide the management of Lake Chelan NRA.

Fire Management Plan

In 2007, the North Cascades NPS Complex completed a fire management plan, revising and replacing the 1991 Wildland Fire Management Plan and the 1995 Stehekin Valley Forest Fuel Reduction/Firewood Management Plan. The plan further

develops a fire management program that restores and maintains ecosystem processes while minimizing the impact of fire to the public, firefighters, natural and cultural resources, and private property.

North Cascades NPS Complex Wilderness Plan

The Washington Park Wilderness Act of 1988 designated approximately 94% percent of the North Cascades NPS Complex as the Stephen Mather Wilderness. Notwithstanding several administrative provisions largely pertaining to hydropower development, the Act directed the NPS to manage the wilderness in accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1964. In 1989, the NPS developed and implemented a wilderness management plan as an internal matter to guide management of the area. The 1989 Wilderness Management Plan still serves as the basis for management of all wilderness areas and backcountry in the complex. The plan provides management standards for mandatory backcountry permits, group size, campfires, sanitation, stock use, grazing, management of the Pacific Crest Trail, trail and bridge development, interpretation, cultural resource protection, cross country travel, and minimum tool use.

In recent years, many management issues have emerged that were not foreseen by the authors of the wilderness management plan. Park staff generally believe that an update of the wilderness management plan, with public review and comment (which were lacking in the original wilderness management plan), is needed to address these new issues. An update is also needed to provide general management guidance for North Cascades National Park, as the guidance provided by the 1988 General Management Plan is more than 20 years old.

Mountain Lakes Fishery Management Plan

In 2009, the National Park Service completed the North Cascades NPS Complex Mountain Lakes Fishery Management Plan. The purpose of the fishery management plan is to guide cooperative fishery management actions by the NPS and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in order to:

- Conserve native biological integrity;
- Provide a variety of recreational opportunities and visitor experiences, including sport fishing; and
- Resolve the long-standing debate and conflicts over fish stocking in the naturally

fishless mountain lakes in the North Cascades NPS Complex.

The Mountain Lakes Fishery Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement applies the results of long-term research into the ecological effects of fish stocking in natural mountain lakes as directed in 1986 by the Director of the National Park Service, and in 1987 by the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. It also satisfies the terms of a 1991 consent decree between the North Cascades Conservation Council and the National Park Service. The consent decree required the NPS to conduct an environmental impact analysis of fish stocking upon completion of ecological research.

Settlement Agreement for the Skagit River Hydroelectric Project

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in May 1995 issued a new 30-year license to the City of Seattle, Seattle City Light for continued operation of the Skagit River Hydroelectric facility in Ross Lake NRA. The National Park Service was one of several parties that intervened in the relicensing process to resolve issues related to project operation, fisheries and wildlife, recreation and aesthetics, erosion control, and archeological and historic resources. The terms, conditions and responsibilities regarding these issues were captured in the following settlement agreements:

- fishery settlement agreement,
- settlement agreement on recreation and aesthetics,
- settlement agreement concerning erosion control,
- settlement agreement concerning wildlife, and
- settlement agreement concerning cultural resources.

These various settlement agreements provide a wide variety of management guidance, including funding for mitigation and various enhancement measures that directly or indirectly affect management of Ross Lake NRA. Additional descriptions of the Skagit River Hydroelectric Project are located in Chapter 2: Foundation for Planning and Management in the Special Congressional Designations, Authorizations, and Mandates, and Chapter 5: Affected Environment in the Overview of Ross Lake NRA.

Plans for Adjacent Federal Lands

Adjacent U.S. Forest Service Plans

Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest are the only two federal lands immediately adjacent to Ross Lake NRA. Each of these national forests has a land and resource management plan. The plan for Mount Baker-Snoqualmie was last updated in 1990, and the plan for the Okanogan-Wenatchee was last updated in 1989.

Skagit River Management Plan

The Skagit River Management Plan was written in 1983 to address management of the Skagit, Sauk, and Suiattle Wild and Scenic Rivers. The plan provides management authority, goals, and direction for administration of the river system. The plan is very comprehensive; and includes management direction for recreation, land use, cultural and natural resource stewardship, interpretation, research, and Native American treaty rights. The plan applies only to U.S. Forest Service lands.

Recreation Facility Analysis for Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest

Many of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest's developed recreation sites were built 30-50 years ago. Since then, visitor preferences and demographics have changed. Some sites no longer serve projected recreation demand and some facilities are in poor shape and do not meet visitors' expectations. To address these changed conditions and national direction, the national forest is currently implementing the recreation facility analysis (RFA) process for developed recreation sites. The outcome will be a list of prioritized actions to more effectively manage these recreation sites.

Plans for Adjacent British Columbia Parks, Ministry of the Environment, Canada

Skagit Valley Provincial Park Management Plan

In January 1998, B.C. Parks Lower Mainland District produced the Skagit Valley Provincial Park Management Plan. This plan is an administrative manual which guides a park's management for a five to ten year term. It sets out objectives and actions for conservation, development, interpretation and operation of a park.

Highlights of the plan include:

- Recognition of the integral role of the Skagit Valley Provincial Park as a component of an internationally significant group of protected areas within the United States and Canada, and recommends cooperation with federal, state, and provincial jurisdictions
- Establishment of the purpose of the park, in contrast to the more developed Chilliwack Lake, Cultus Lake, and E.C. Manning Provincial Parks, is to maintain the primitive atmosphere that the park currently possesses and presents, including its use as a gateway to North Cascades National Park and Ross Lake National Recreation Area in the United States
- A request to the Ministry of Transportation and Highways to maintain the Silver-Skagit Road in its present gravel condition with improvements limited to safety
- Restriction of park facility development along the Skagit River to maintain a special river experience recognizing the river's provincial heritage status
- Cooperation with the United States National Park Service in proposing to develop visitor services at Ross Lake, including an international visitor center along with sanitation, power, water and sewer facilities
- Addressing the need to establish a stabilized water level for Ross Lake during the summer months with the United States National Park Service and Seattle City Light
- Providing park and natural history interpretive programs working closely with First Nations, and local interest groups, and the United States National Park Service staff
- Proposing to acquire the private land and mineral claims in the provincial park when they become available
- Establishing the need to review existing ecological reserves to ensure adequate representation and proposing additional ecological reserves if appropriate
- Encouraging horse use in the Skagit Valley by providing staging areas, horse trails, and wilderness horse camps linking surrounding parks
- Recommending the preparation of resource plans for vegetation management, fire management, fish management, wildlife management, and wildlife viewing in association with proposals for E.C. Manning Provincial Park, North Cascades National

Park, and Ross Lake National Recreation Area.

(http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/planning/mgmtplns/skagit/skagit_mp.pdf)

State and Regional Plans

State Route 20 North Cascades Scenic Highway Corridor Management Plans

In December 1999, the Washington State Department of Transportation produced the North Cascades Scenic Highway Corridor Management Plan.

Corridor plans provide a detailed investigation of state highways. The goal of these projects is to clarify improvement needs for individual transportation corridors in order to facilitate project delivery. Key features of a corridor plan include:

- Analysis of current and projected future operating conditions
- Public involvement in defining problems and developing solutions
- Initial screen of environmental considerations
- Definition of highway improvements to meet statewide planning goals and action strategies, with cost estimates and assessment of risk
- Action strategy for implementing proposed improvements.

The North Cascades Scenic Highway Corridor Management Plan was developed to assist corridor communities, agencies, and interest groups involved with the scenic highway by forming partnerships and strategies to address tourism and resource management issues. The plan recognizes that although State Route 20 is a designated State Scenic Highway, it is also a working corridor and commuter route. The corridor management plan is not regulatory; however, its goals, objectives, and strategies were developed to strengthen partnerships by complementing existing management plans and complying with existing regulations (WSDOT Dec. 1999, p. I-2).