

8th District Alpine Lakes Wilderness Additions

The Case for Wilderness



Just 45 minutes east of downtown Seattle, the Pratt, Middle Fork and South Fork Snoqualmie Valleys are the closest mountain valleys to Puget Sound population centers. This remarkable area includes glacier-cut u-shaped valleys, snow capped peaks, old-growth forests, whitewater rivers and strong native trout runs.

In 1976, the Alpine Lakes Wilderness was designated by Congress and has become one of the most visited Wildernesses in the country. Now, thirty years later, there is an opportunity to permanently protect key additions to the Alpine Lakes that will preserve important

wildlife habitat, existing recreational opportunities and local economies that rely on both. Congressionally-designated Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River Designations are the strongest and most durable means to ensure that these special areas are preserved for our children and grandchildren to experience.



Protecting Rare Low Elevation Forests

- The proposed additions in the Pratt, Middle Fork and South Fork Snoqualmie Valleys provide an opportunity to protect rare low elevation old growth and mature forests, half of which are below 3,000 feet. Such lands were largely excluded from the existing Alpine Lakes Wilderness in 1976. Statewide, of the roughly 2.7 million acres of designated Wilderness on national forest land, just 6 percent includes lands below 3,000 feet elevation.
- Low elevation lands are snow-free for much of the year and are more biologically productive, supporting many more species than higher elevation habitats. The lands to be protected provide critical winter and spring habitat for wildlife when high country is deep in snow.

Preserving Existing Recreational Opportunities

- The Middle Fork and South Fork valleys are the closest and most accessible mountain valleys to residents of the greater Seattle-Bellevue Metropolitan area. The proposed additions have been carefully crafted to preserve existing recreational opportunities for hiking, camping, rafting, kayaking, horseback riding, mountain biking and wildlife viewing. It also protects a large area of accessible lowland forests, preserving hunting and fishing opportunities in primitive settings.



Protecting Wildlife Habitat

- These wild mountain valleys boast abundant elk and deer populations. Cougars, bears and bobcats are present, and at least one grizzly has been sighted in the Pratt River Valley. Although salmon are not present in the Middle Fork because it is above Snoqualmie Falls, there are substantial populations of resident trout.

Clean Water & Flood Control

- The Pratt, Middle Fork and South Fork watersheds are sources of clean water, important for downstream fisheries and commercial and residential water users. Preserving the forests as Wilderness would ensure maintenance of flow during the dry summer months, and aids in flood control.
- The Snoqualmie basin is subject to flood events on a regular basis (many areas are in the 'rain on snow' zone). Low-elevation forest valleys are critical to controlling runoff rates here and the proposed additions would preserve intact forest ecosystems, protecting against increasing flood severity on downstream infrastructure and residents.