

MEMORANDUM

TO J.C. Leman
Regional Manager
Lower Mainland Region

Attn: D. E. Green

PARKS BRANCH
DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION
AND TRAVEL INDUSTRY

OFFICE OF Interpretation

3-2-17-4 and 5-7-5-63

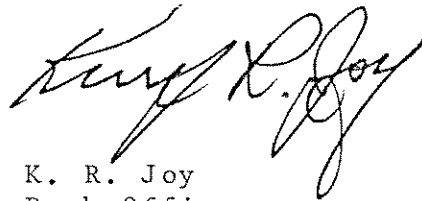
June 16, 1976

Interpretation Assessment of the Skagit Valley Recreation Area

Attached is our interpretation assessment report for the Skagit Valley. It consists of two parts: (1) Natural Feature Analysis; (2) A draft copy of "The Concept for Interpretation of the Skagit Valley". The first part, prepared largely by Michael Easton, reflects a synthesis of available information and original observations made in the summer of 1975. The second part was prepared by Michael Easton and our Interpretation Assessment staff; it divides the valley into several major interpretation regions and provides a direction for interpretation in the valley.

We will be meeting with Historic Parks and Sites in order to provide for historic interpretation in the Skagit.

The report is presented for your consideration with a view to incorporating the concept into a master plan for the Skagit Valley.



K. R. Joy
Park Officer
i/c Interpretation

Att.

cc G. F. Macnab, attn. M. Turner
cc L. E. Pavlick

LP:lh

INTERPRETATION ASSESSMENT SECTION
INTERPRETATION DIVISION
PARKS BRANCH
DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND CONSERVATION
VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA

ECOLOGICAL RESERVES COLLECTION
GOVERNMENT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
VICTORIA, B.C.
VBV 1X4

THE CONCEPT FOR INTERPRETATION OF
THE SKAGIT VALLEY RECREATION AREA

PART 2 OF THE INTERPRETATION ASSESSMENT REPORT
FOR THE SKAGIT VALLEY RECREATION AREA

MICHAEL EASTON

and

INTERPRETATION ASSESSMENT STAFF

November, 1975

T.E. Lee

DIRECTOR
PARKS BRANCH

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A. The Necessity of Interpretation in the Skagit Valley
Recreation Area

The majority of people that drive into the Skagit Valley over the rough logging road usually stay for several days at a time. The Skagit Valley is a place where people have to make some effort to get off the beaten track for the access road ends about three miles into Washington State. The American visitors to the Valley tend to congregate in the American Ross Lake National Recreation Area campground while the Canadian visitors tend to stay on the Canadian side of the Skagit Valley. One of the major charms of the Canadian side of the Skagit Valley is the unregimented camping - the people camp where they please.

What brings the people to the Skagit Valley Recreation Area? Is it the warm dry climate, the spectacular natural setting offered by majestic mountains, the unpolluted air, the unusually great variety in the flora and fauna, the tasty clear water of the Skagit River and its tributary creeks? Certainly these factors may be part of the answer, but by far the primary reason for people visiting the Recreation Area in the summer is the fishing and in the fall and winter for hunting. Both of these ventures are extractive and affect the wildlife resource accordingly. Inevitably, a sound wildlife management scheme will have to be implemented. Already the sport fishery has declined dramatically from its former splendor. Today a fisherman considers himself lucky to catch any fish that measures up to the legal size limit, the vast majority of fish caught being 6" - 10". Such a catch indicates either that the big fish are too crafty or, more likely, that the recruitment is insufficient to maintain a balanced population structure. The fishery is being over-exploited for the resource available. An interpretive program along with good fisheries management could keep the fishing visitors informed through talks on river life as to the reasons for any new fisheries regulations such as the use of artificial lures only rule.

The hunters would be a much more difficult group to interpret to, since there are fewer of them and they tend to be more widely scattered. An interpretation program in the Skagit Valley would serve the hunter and fisherman as well as others attracted to the valley such as campers, bird watchers, nature photographers, hikers, canoeists and other recreationists.

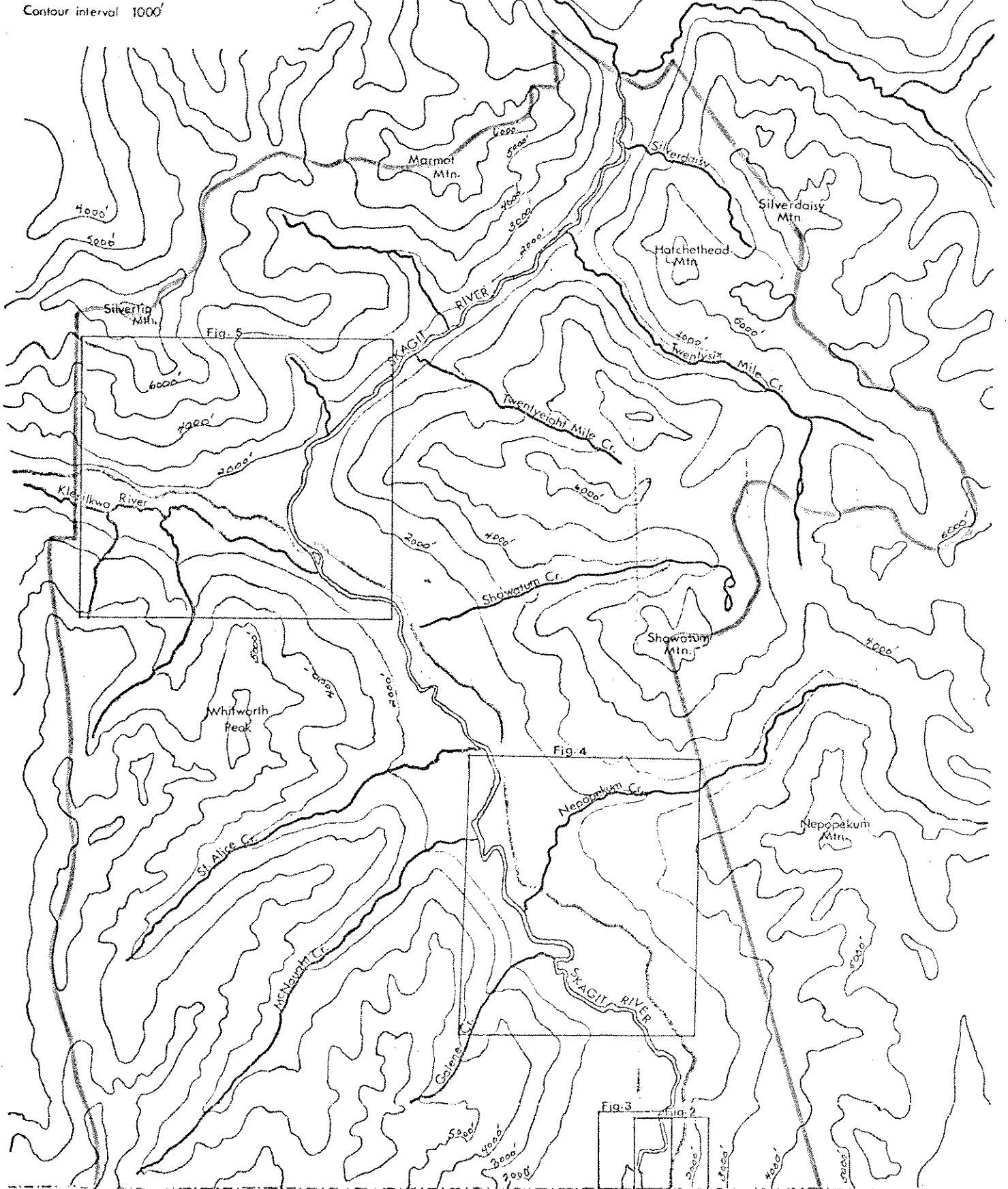
Figure 1

Skagit Valley Recreation Area
Location of Figures

Scale - 1:50,000

3 Miles

Contour interval 1000'



The Skagit Valley Recreation Area offers such a wide variety of habitats, not only through logging disturbance by man, but also by the transitional nature of the Valley between the Interior Douglas-fir Zone and the Coastal Douglas-fir Zone. The Skagit Valley is one of the few areas in B. C. where great concentrations of red rhododendrons may be found. The Ponderosa Pine reaches its most westerly range limit at this latitude in the Skagit Valley.

Over 377 plant species have been identified and 177 species of birds have been seen in the Recreation Area.

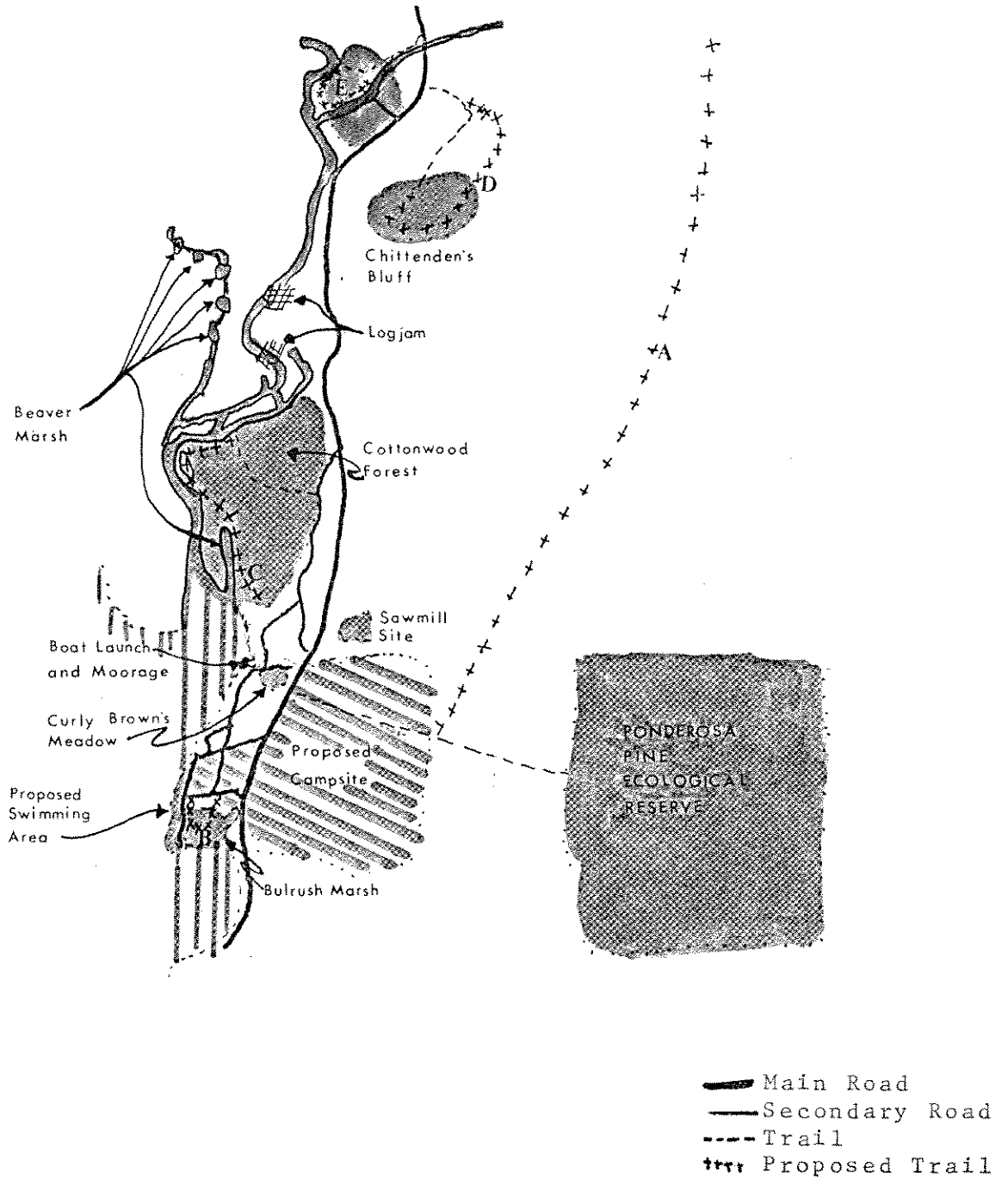
In the spring and fall at least 130 species of birds use the Skagit Valley as a migration route. The Valley is also the species border for several varieties of mammals and birds. The redstart and veery have not been previously reported breeding this far west. Hybrid zones occur between the coast black-tail deer and mule deer, between various mouse species, and between the red squirrel and Douglas squirrel.

Many mammals are commonly observed either during the day or in the morning or evening. These include deer, bear, beaver and river otter.

There is some local opposition, in Hope, to keeping the Skagit Valley as it is i.e. no more flooding. Interpretation should try to reach this group of people, pointing out the value of natural areas left unexploited. In this regard the implementation of a naturalist program for the Hope and Fraser Valley school children would be a positive step towards ensuring that, for example, a large Douglas fir may be viewed in terms other than board feet and dollar signs.

A dozen or more busloads of children in various parts of the Recreation Area at the same time could be accommodated without anyone feeling unduly crowded. Proper management could allow the opportunity for everyone to feel the wilderness experience. To accommodate any extensive naturalist school program, the hunting season opening and closing dates would probably have to be changed to limit the possibility of any accidents.

Figure 2: Ross Lake Region (east side of Skagit River)



Scale in Miles

B. The Major Interpretive Regions within the Skagit Valley Recreation Area (Figure 1)

There are four regions within the Recreation Area which offer features of great interpretation potential. The regions and their features will now be examined. In order to realize the public viewing and appreciation of many of the natural history features of the Skagit Valley Recreation Area, certain developments must first be implemented.

1. Ross Lake Region (east side of the Skagit River) (Figure 2)

This area extends from the border to Chittendens bridge (Plate 1) and from the Skagit River to the Ponderosa Pine Ecological Reserve. The intensively used portion is from Curly Brown's meadow, south to the border on the west side of the main road as the water level permits.

INTERPRETIVE THEMES

- the history and formation of Ross Lake; the land plants which survive flooding; the aquatic plants which survive long dry periods; the grass holding the soil of the upper drawdown area intact; the afternoon southerly winds created by the presence of the lake; the dust storms in the lower drawdown area where no grass grows.
- the newly formed cat-tail marsh (Plate 2); marsh plant succession as indicated by various species of rushes and sedges; Douglas fir trees killed by flooding (see Plate 14, Part 1); the reason for the creation of the marsh in this particular spot, where the stumps of a former Douglas fir forest are still visible.
- The Skagit River: its origin; the unusually large fluctuations in water volume because of the fast snow melt in the big burned over area in Manning Park at the headwaters of the Skagit; the reason for recent changes in the river course; the life history and spawning times of the Rainbow Trout (June) and Dolly Varden (August); the spawning grounds (Klesilkwa River); the state of the fishery and the reasons for any management imposed fishing restrictions; the formation of log jams, and the dependence of fish upon these river barricades for shade from the hot summer sun, since many shade giving cottonwoods and cedars had been logged.
- the regeneration of the black cottonwoods after the initial logging for cedar; the reason for the abundant variety of mushrooms, in the spring and fall, along the roads lined by these cottonwoods; the effect of the light on the forest floor vegetation when the canopy has been partially opened.

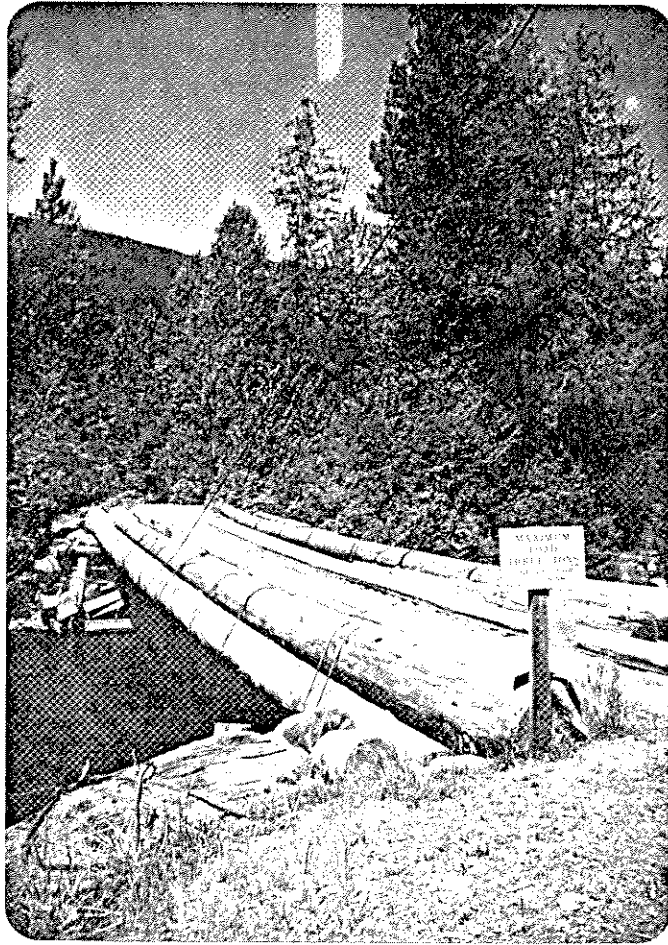


Plate 1. Chittenden's Bridge across the Skagit River. Beyond lies the Ponderosa Meadow.

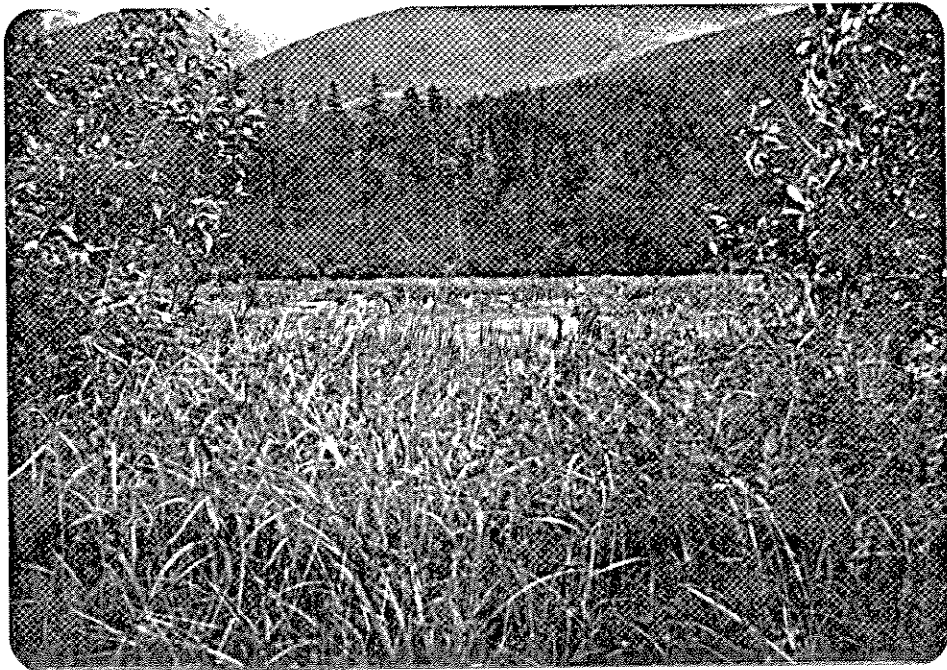


Plate 2. The recently created cat-tail marsh on the northeast section of the drawdown area.

-animal watching: the deer in and around Curly Brown's meadow up until the middle of June; interpret the use of radio tracking collars and ear tags that are seen on some deer; point out the significance of the rump patch and tail to indicate evidence of hybridization between two subspecies, the Columbia blacktail and mule deer; point out the different seasonal ranges for the bucks and does; point out the importance of these lowland meadows for deer, especially does, in the spring; beaver habitat in the old flood channels; life history of homes and underwater food storage, but no beaver dams; river otter in and around the main river channel; many otter slides around the beaver habitat.

-bar ecology: the reason why certain plants such as Mimulus only grow on sand bars, while others, such as Phacelia tend to grow on gravel bars; wet sand bars are excellent places to see animal tracks for interpreting both the kinds of mammals active at night, and their behaviour;

-the dry rocky outcrops of Chittenden's bluff (directly above Chittenden's bridge): excellent place for viewing a climax Douglas fir forest on a dry site; interpret the difference between the rocky knolls and the shallow trenches, the latter having a much lush vegetation.

-the resident birds of Curly Brown's meadow: these include such locally abundant species as evening grosbeaks, (Plate 3), numbering over 60, which frequented the deer trap for the salt that had leached into the soil from the salt licks used as bait for the trap, and rufous hummingbirds abundant in early summer throughout the valley.



Plate 3. Evening grosbeaks seek salt traces at salt lick site in Curly Brown's Meadow.

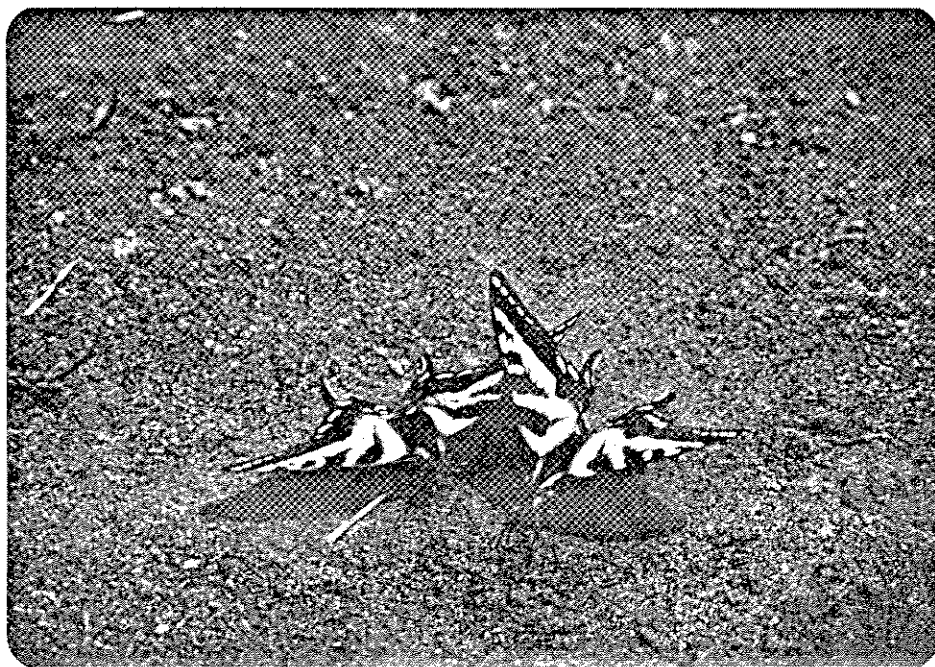


Plate 4. Pale swallowtail butterflies (Papilio eurymedon) are commonly found on the moist sand bars.

THE INTERPRETATION PLAN

This region is the most heavily used focal point for campers in the whole Recreation Area. There are several reasons for this. Curly Brown's Meadow (also called Cedar Hollow) is the only open space of several acres that is visible from the main road and near the river. When the reservoir is at full pool, the old river channel, located at the end of the road leading into the meadow, is an ideal spot for launching and mooring boats. Also, the river is easily navigable by small motorboats at this point and many of the popular fishing holes around the river mouth are close at hand. Many of the people who camp in the meadow have been coming to this same spot for years. One old-timer used to come in on pack horses before the logging road was built. In fact, he hasn't missed an opening day's fishing in the past thirty-five years. Quite frequently, in the meadow, there is a large campfire built in the evening near the small group of second growth cedar trees and most of the people in the meadow gravitate there to swap fishing stories. This is the only place where this group camping spirit is perpetuated in the Valley, although the Vancouver Region and Coast Planning Section will probably be making recommendations that several of these types of arrangements be constructed in this area, so as to maintain this atmosphere. (Turner, pers. comm.) There is one problem, however, in the continued use of Curly Brown's Meadow in this way. The concern is for the feeding of the resident deer population. The meadow is heavily used by the deer right up until people start arriving for the opening day fishing on June 21st. Perhaps it isn't the people so much at this period that keep the deer away, as their pet dogs which are allowed to run loose. Also, after the first week in July, the grass and other vegetation is so heavily trampled as to be useless for deer forage.

South of Curly Brown's Meadow are a series of roads with primitive campsites roughed out. Those campsites bordering the river and lake are constantly in use over the summer. Dust from vehicle traffic along

these roads is a serious problem. Just east of this area, in a large growth of Douglas firs, Vancouver Planning Division intends to lay out campsites among the widely spaced trees. (Turner and Spriggs, pers. comm.) Several roads already permeate this grove and at least one large area is already cleared amongst the trees and could be used by groups of campers. Another much larger series of campsites (over 100 units) is planned for the old flood plain on the other side of the main road opposite the grove of Douglas-fir trees (Turner, pers. comm.) This campsite may later be expanded to reach the steep valley sides. The major problem with a campsite development this large on the east side of the main road is the pressure which may be brought on the Ponderosa Pine Ecological Reserve located directly above the proposed campsite area from elevation 1725' upwards. Dr. V.J. Krajina, Head of the Ecological Reserves Committee, is very much against such a development because of the probable increase in visitors to the Reserve Area which may result in damage by trampling of the delicate, dry rocky outcrop flora. There is no question that the flora of this Reserve is unique and very interesting scientifically (Plate 11, Part 1). Alternative dry rocky outcroppings are available which could be used by naturalists to illustrate the general principles of such a habitat. To make matters worse, a trail already exists which leads directly to the Reserve from just opposite the Curly Brown Meadow. Fortunately, this trail is not well marked but several of the old-timers know of its existence and hike up to the Reserve occasionally for a good view of Ross Lake and the Skagit Valley. Furthermore, the Reserve is clearly visible from the drawdown area or lake and inspires curiosity in those that observe it. Discussions on how to avoid large scale intrusions on this area must be held with representatives from Parks Planning, the Ecological Reserves Committee and Parks Interpretation.

Swimming

Swimming is an activity which is pursued by relatively few people during the summer, although the water in the northeastern corner of Ross Lake is comfortably warm. There are several reasons for this. The campsites along the spit of land between the cat-tail marsh and the lake restrict swimming to those local campers only, unless a

person walks to the end of the spit and swims off the old road. The whole east side of this spit with a bit of manicuring would make an excellent beach for the campers allowing walking access only. Picnic tables could be placed under the shade of the small second growth cottonwoods. The cat-tail marsh, a valuable area for interpretation (Plate 2) should be preserved and used as the subject of an afternoon nature walk. Another problem is the stumps. These would have to be removed from the swimming area, but should be retained in the cat-tail marsh area as a subject for interpretation. Finally, the surface debris on the lake should be cleared and perhaps stored for use as firewood in the campsites. According to the flooding agreement with the Seattle City Light Corporation, the Americans are responsible for clearing this debris, but during my stay up until the end of July I never saw any evidence that this part of the agreement was being adhered to. The floating debris problem was much worse on the west side of the lake where the prevailing afternoon winds tend to concentrate the material. Recommendations that Seattle City Light Corporation abide by the agreement should be passed through the proper channels immediately to ensure that such a problem restricting recreational use does not persist.

Boats and Boat Moorage

Most of the fishing in the Recreation Area by boat is in the river mouth and extends about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile upstream to where a recent logjam prevents any further access. At full pool, most of the navigable river could be reached by rowing upstream since the current is rather weak. I cannot see where a motor is justified in such a small area where most of the boats are concentrated. Also, boats should be prevented from entering the swimming area to reduce the likelihood of accidents. Perhaps motors should be restricted to the lake only. Furthermore, submerged stumps pose a threat to motorboat enthusiasts on the Canadian side of Ross Lake because of the shallow water and the floating debris. Boats could continue to be moored at the present location at the end of the road leading into Curly Brown's Meadow.

Trails

The trail system in the Skagit Valley is very inadequate for would-be hikers and for any interpretation program. The most heavily used

trail was the Skyline Trail leading to the alpine country of Manning Park. At least four parties that I know used this trail during July. The Skyline Trail (Plate 5) is one of the few trails in the Recreation Area that is well marked from the main road. Since this trail is located only two miles from the proposed campground, one of the top priorities at the time of campsite completion would be a trail (Trail A, Figure 2) leaving from the main road near the campground and proceeding at an angle so as to climb onto the first bench and then along this bench to the junction of the Skyline and Centennial Trails. The trail could pass through the old sawmill site, if desired. In Figure 2 the proposed trail is shown leading from the trail that presently goes to the Ponderosa Pine Ecological Reserve. The latter trail could somehow be disguised or blocked off so that all hikers followed along to the Skyline Trail.

Shorter trails for any interpretation programme on the east side of the Skagit River in the Ross Lake area are required immediately. Several such trails will now be proposed. One of the top priority trails (Trail B, Figure 2) is that across the cat-tail marsh (Plate 2). A twenty-five yard buffer zone from the beginning of the marsh into the forest should be left untouched by any future campsite developments. The trail should start from the existing road in the forest, pass through the buffer zone, where some fine examples of water killed Douglas fir are found, and out on the cat-tail marsh via a boardwalk. This boardwalk should angle over to the swimming spit and the trail then continue down the east side of the spit away from the existing road and loop back into the forest to the initial starting place. This short trail would be ideal for guided nature walks.

The other three proposed trails use existing roadways for part of their length. In order to maintain the aesthetic quality of trail C (Figure 2), it is recommended that the system of roadways north of Curly Brown's Meadow and east of the main road be blocked off to prevent vehicular traffic from using them. The proposed loop in this trail would be heavily used immediately if completed and properly signposted. The trail to Chittenden's Bluff (Trail D, Figure 2) is actually an old access road used when securing the cables for Chittenden's Bridge, but has since been blocked off from the main road. The ecology

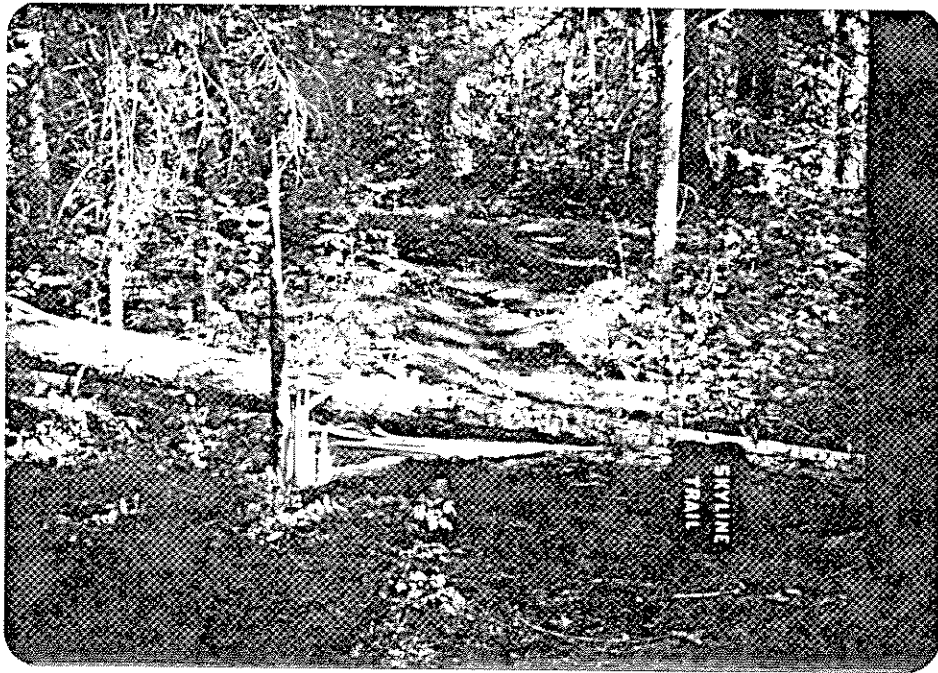


Plate 5. Junction of the Skyline trail and Centennial (Whitworth) Trail.
Maintenance on all trails is necessary.

of the bluff is similar to that of the Ponderosa Pine Ecological Reserve. Some of the smaller Douglas fir trees could be removed from below the bluff to accommodate a view of the Skagit River and Ross Lake. The ground cover of the bluff is very susceptible to trampling, therefore signs requiring people to stay on the trail would be needed. The trail would then proceed to the top of the knoll where a Douglas-fir-lodgepole pine association occurs and then back down to the lower trail as shown in Figure 2. This is a high priority trail to provide an easily accessible view of the valley which people of all ages could take in. Some steeper sections of the old road would have to be modified with gentle switchbacks. This trail would be too long for naturalist guided walks, but ideal as a self-guiding nature trail.

The northerly entrance to the third proposed trail (E) is actually a short roadway which ends in an open space of about 1½ acres with a stream running beside it. The area is used for group camping and has a trail leading to the river. This trail has just the right layout for a nature trail in that it meanders through old second growth mixed coniferous forest to regenerating cottonwood and finally ending at the river with some riparian habitat. With some widening and brushing-out this trail is good as is. The proposed section of the loop walk would then head south to the small stream and back along this stream to the group campsite. This loop trail would be extremely rewarding for bird watchers.

Signs

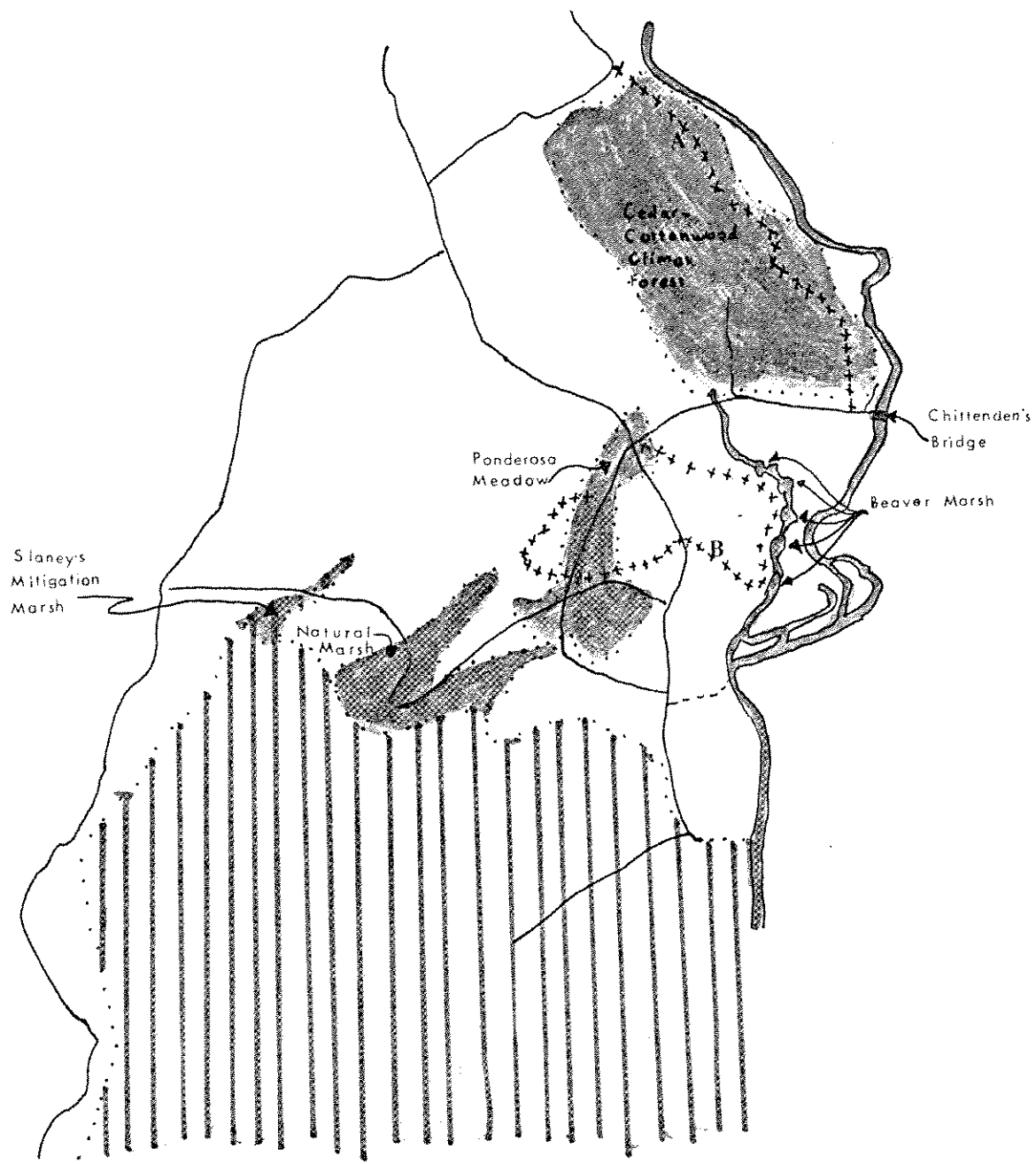
A large outdoor interpretation sign should be drawn up featuring the trails and roads of the whole Ross Lake region, including the west side of the river.

Interpretation Amphitheatre

This part of the Recreation Area should certainly have an amphitheatre, but the location should be determined after the building of any campsites. An impromptu area may be set up by the resident naturalist before this time. There is no potential competition for attendance with the American Interpretation Programme given by the

National Park Rangers, as Canadian visitors to the area tend to stay on the Canadian side of the Skagit Valley. Also, in the opinion of the author, the programmes run by the B.C. Provincial Parks Branch are of a comparatively higher standard.

Figure 3: Ross Lake Region (west side of Skagit River)



— Secondary Road
- - - Trail
++++ Proposed Trail

0 ————— 1
Scale in Miles

2. Ross Lake Region (west side of the Skagit River (Figure 3))

This area centres around the Ponderosa meadow, the beaver marshes and the old cottonwood forest by the river.

INTERPRETATION THEMES

- the Ponderosa Meadow (Plate 7, Part 1): old field succession; the formation of the meadow through fire and ranching; the life history and significance of Ponderosa Pine trees; the resistance of the ponderosa pines to fire; the various microhabitats of the meadow habitat to grapefern habitat; the importance of the meadow as a spring feeding range for deer; the reason for the unique bird life associated with the meadow.
- forest succession: second growth Douglas fir on a dry site; mixed coniferous (Douglas Fir and grand fir) and deciduous, the deciduous including white birch, alder and trembling aspen; eventually the climax species will be Douglas fir.
- cedar-cottonwood climax forest: the reason for the sparse ground cover; the significance of the old flood channels through the area; the vegetation associated with these flood channels represents a younger stage in the climax succession; comparison of second growth cottonwood forest (45-50 years old) with the climax forest (over 100 years old).
- logging: significance of large cedar stumps with steps cut in them; much of the coniferous regeneration is a result of past logging operations.
- beaver marsh: product of old flooded channels; dense cover and relative seclusion offer good habitat for beaver, otter, deer and many warblers, as well as for nesting mergansers and mallards; give the life history of some of the marsh inhabitants.
- insect watching: butterflies (Plate 4) at the beaver marsh or along the river; variety of beetles meeting and mating on the flowers of the Ponderosa Meadow (Plate 6); rarities such as the bee moth (Plate 7) may be found in the meadow.

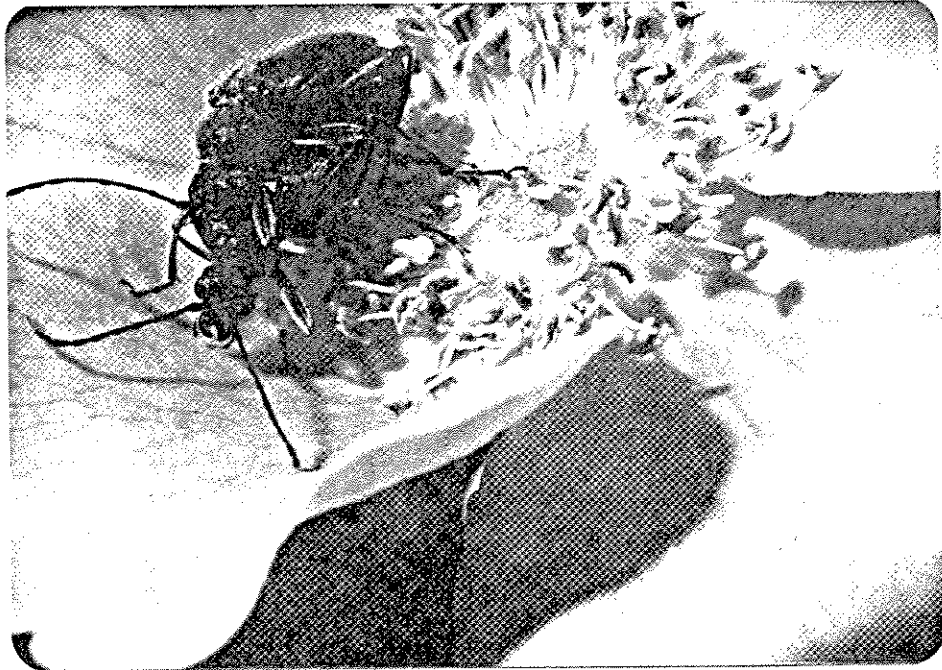


Plate 6. Long-horned boring beetles meeting and mating on a wild rose.



Plate 7. Bee moth, a resident of the Ponderosa Meadow. This meadow is an excellent place for insect watching.

INTERPRETATION PLAN

Accommodation

No camping, except wilderness camping, should be permitted anywhere on the west side of the Skagit between Ross Lake and the twenty-six mile bridge. This ruling should come into effect as soon as the campsite on the east side of the Skagit is completed. To uphold this ruling, vehicle traffic, with the exception of government vehicles, should be prevented from gaining access to the west side of the river. The use of Chittenden's Bridge should be barred on the east side. These restrictions will help protect the Ponderosa Meadow from any further abuse from campers and bonfire parties.

Swimming

No swimming areas should be developed on this side of the river.

Boating

Once road access to the west side of the river is closed, a small wilderness camp for boaters may be considered on the west side of Ross Lake near the International Border. This undertaking should be subject to a discussion of the increased fire hazard. No dock need be built, since the boats could be pulled up on the gravelly shore.

Trails

Since vehicle access would be stopped from reaching the west side of the Skagit, a case may be made for a hiking trail on this side following the length of the Skagit River (trail A, Figures 3, 4, & 5) up to the 26-mile bridge. The argument raised against a river trail in the past by the Fish and Wildlife Branch has been that the river would be too accessible to fishermen who would then put increased pressure on the fishery. In regulating the access points to the trail and in allowing the trail to touch the riverbank only intermittently, I believe that the walking distance will be sufficient to regulate the numbers using the trail. The Skagit River trail would then connect up with the Galene Creek trail (Figure 4) (Plate 8) that leads into the alpine country (Plate 13, part 1) within the Recreation Area. Several wilderness campsites could be located



Plate 8. View from the Galene Creek Trail looking east at the Canadian section of Ross Lake at full pool.

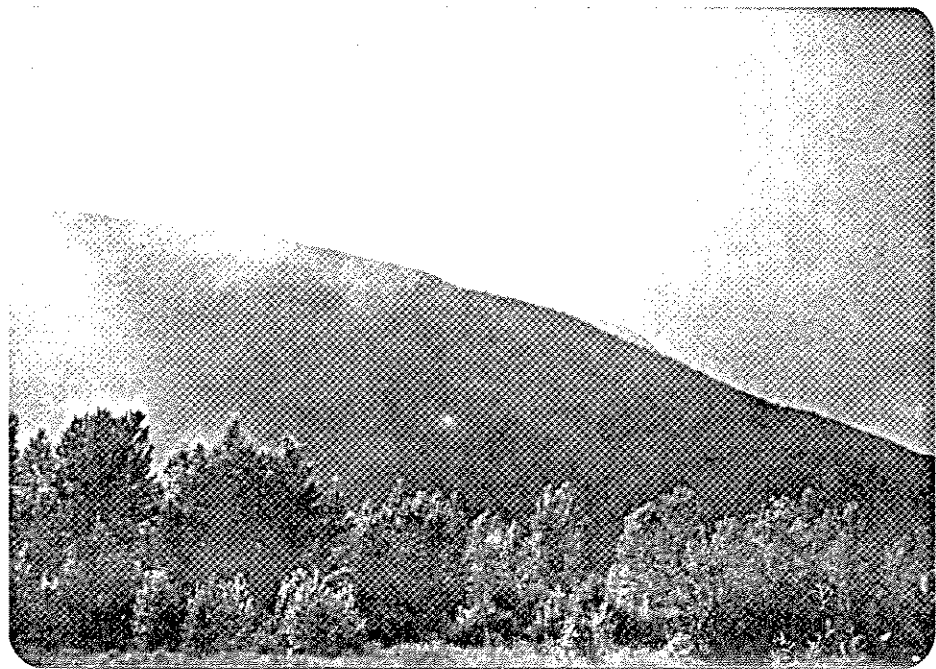


Plate 9 .Smoke from a lightning fire on the ridge above Galene Creek.

along the River trail. A small footbridge would have to be built over the Klesilkwa River. (Figure 5).

One of the most interesting proposed self-guiding nature trails in the Recreation Area is the loop walk from the Ponderosa meadow (Trail B, Figure 3) to the beaver marsh and back to the meadow. The diversity in habitats through which this trail would pass ranges from open meadow to Douglas-fir forest on a dry site to second growth cottonwoods to river riparian and marsh. This trail would be a must for any amateur botanist, nature photographer or bird watcher.

Signs

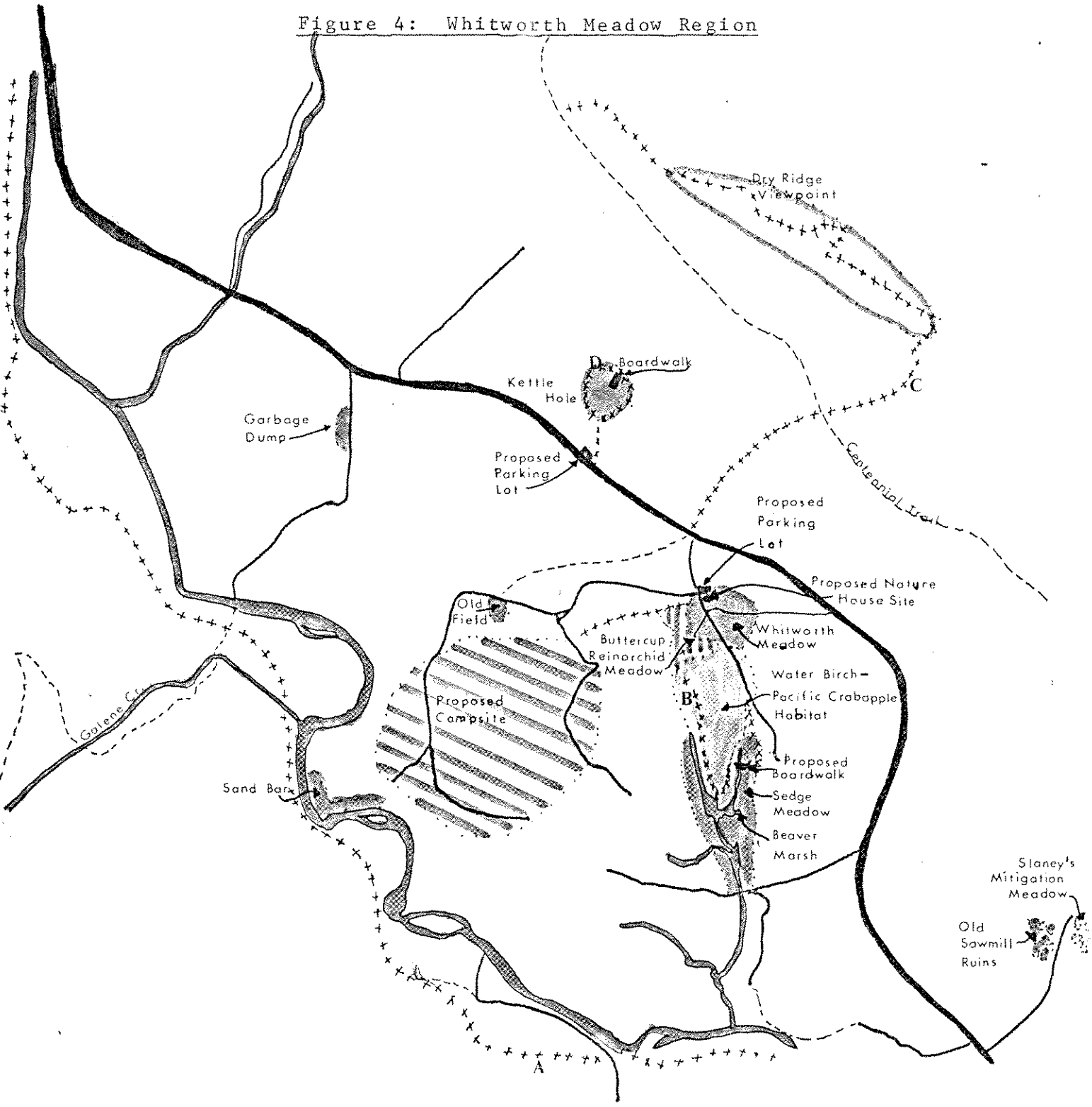
A sign at the crossroads on the north end of the Ponderosa Meadow should depict the uniqueness of the Ponderosa Pine in the meadow, the importance of the meadow for the grazing of deer and bear, and the distinct bird life which inhabits this area. Another sign could point out the surrounding mountain peaks both in Canada and the U.S.A.

Other Considerations

Interpretive canoe trips along the northern shore of Ross Lake and up the Skagit River to the first logjam (Figure 2) would be most worthwhile. On the lake this would allow interpretation of the drawdown area when it is flooded so as to point out both aquatic and landplants living side by side. On the river, bird watching would be extremely rewarding and one could explore the beaver marshes.

On the proposed nature trail around the Ponderosa meadows, deer blinds should be erected on the periphery of the forest beside the trail, so that the animals may be observed while they are feeding.

Figure 4: Whitworth Meadow Region



- Main Road
- Secondary Road
- - - Trail
- + + + + Proposed Trail

Scale in Miles

3. The Whitworth Meadow Region (Figure 4)

The habitats here are extremely diverse ranging through a Douglas fir forest on a mesic site, to an open field site, to a wet meadow to a beaver marsh, to a sand bar. The center for interpretive activity will be the wet meadow and beaver marsh.

INTERPRETIVE THEMES

- the Whitworth meadow: origin of the meadow, comparison of flora to Ponderosa meadow; meadow is bordered by an old second growth Douglas fir forest, which could serve as a forest succession story to compare with the old field succession story in the west side of the Ross Lake Region; the importance of the meadow for deer spring range.
- the wet meadow: one of the few places to find the reinorchid; reason for the abundance of buttercups (result of past grazing practises); dense growth of water birch and pacific crabapple; the reason for the existence of this wet meadow area; the great abundance of birds including evening grosbeaks (Plate 3), cedar waxwings, warblers and rufous hummingbirds.
- the beaver marsh (Plate 11): pond succession; abundance of marsh breeders such as the red-wing blackbird and songsparrow; origin of the beaver marsh (underground springs and seepage from creeks that have gone underground; beaver workings that include a series of dams across the marsh, several beaver lodges, and an immense amount of winter food stored underwater, (there is no sign of recent beaver habitation in the area); deer commonly feed around the edge of the marsh. The cover is extremely dense and so this area is favoured by does to have their fawns. Pond lily and water smartweed are two of the floating plants found here; extremely large western white birches dominate the southeast corner of the marsh.
- sand bar: succession story; animal tracks; congregations of butterflies.
- kettle hole: origin of kettle hole (Plate 12) pond succession; forest succession; birds associated with ponds including warblers and song sparrows; water insects, frogs and salamanders are usually visible for interpretation; pond lily only floating plant; comparison with other ponds such as the beaver marsh.

- Dry ridge viewpoint: unique flora of Hooker's onion, death camas, juniper and others that require lots of sunlight; mixed Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine forest on a dry site; the beaver marshes, etc.; geomorphology featuring the glaciation of the Skagit Valley; physiography of the Skagit River including old channels.
- Man's activities: succession after strip-logging; remains of old sawmill with the unique flora of dry ground light-loving species; the artificial meadow created by F. F. Slaney and Company; the introduced flora (grasses, clover and alfalfa) and the effect of this on the native vegetation.
- The river: the fish and fishery; birds of the river such as spotted sandpiper.



Plate 10. The logged areas west of Whitworth Meadow can be profitably turned into campsites.

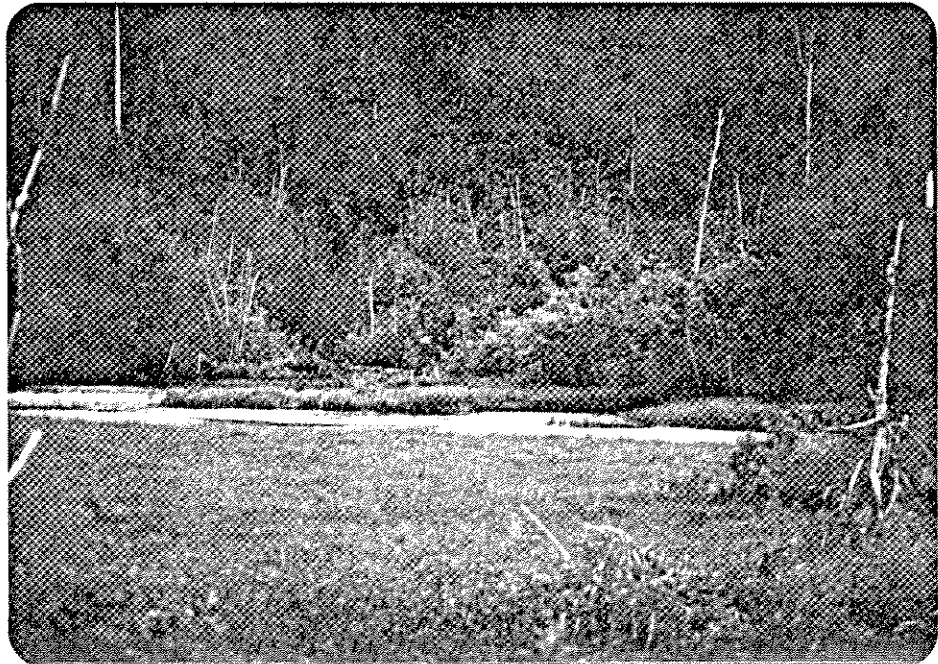


Plate 11. The beaver marsh by Whitworth Meadow, a boardwalk should cross the meadow in the foreground.



Plate 12. Lily covered kettle hole, around which a nature trail has been proposed with a boardwalk advancing about 20 yards into the pond.

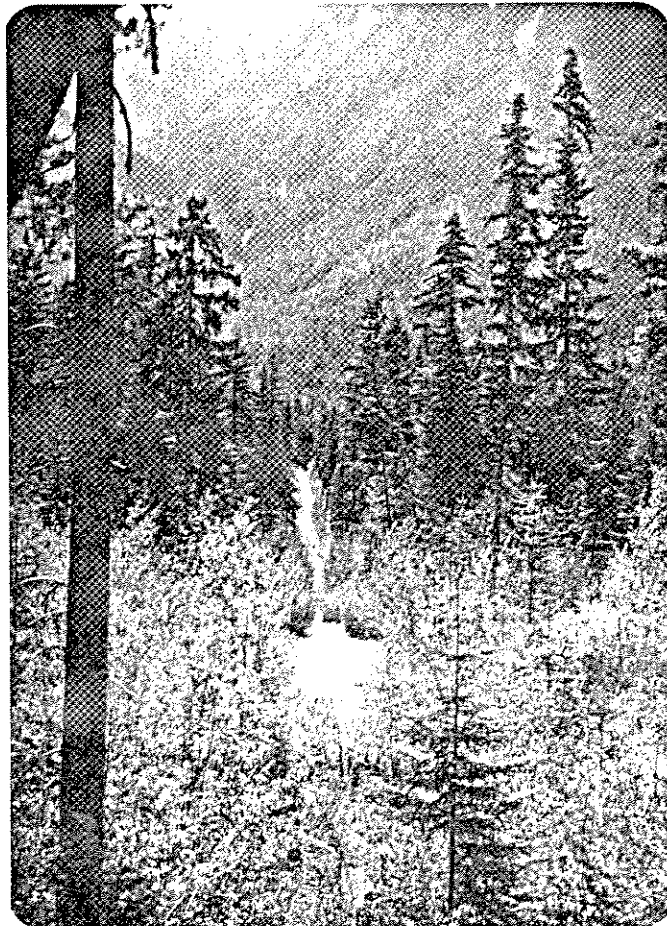


Plate 13. Access road from where connecting trail to Centennial Trail occurs. View looking west up Galene Creek.

INTERPRETATIVE PLAN

Accommodation

This area at present is lightly used by campers with the meadow itself the usual camping spot. A large campsite is being planned for the logged over area west of Whitworth Meadow (Plate 10) (Turner, pers. comm.) This location is ideal because the ground has been so disturbed by logging that little damage would occur in the placement of a campsite of 200 units or more. If the bulk of visitors to the Skagit Valley were accommodated here, then the camping pressure could be reduced in the area around Ross Lake.

Trails

Several trails are proposed for this region. The beaver marsh trail (Trail B, Figure 4) will be the most important trail for interpretation. It could most profitably be used for naturalist conducted walks. Some of the wetter areas, where the trail is proposed, would require building up with gravel. A connecting boardwalk across the marsh is a necessity for pond life observations, (Plate 11) birding and scenic observations of the surrounding mountains since the vegetation around the marsh is so dense. The trail could then connect with an old logging road for the return to Whitworth Meadow.

Another important nature trail, (Trail D, Figure 4), to be built is the Kettle Hole Nature Trail (Plate 12). The kettle hole could best be interpreted by a self guiding nature trail. A boardwalk is also necessary at the pond, but only need extend 20 yards over the water. At present, the Centennial (or Whitworth) Trail is hardly used, but this trail has great potential for further development. The many windfalls and other obstructions need to be removed from the trail. Also, the Centennial Trail plaques along this trail are an eyesore and should be removed. The trail should be renamed the Whitworth Trail, since the Whitworths were the people who built it originally. Connecting trails to the Whitworth Trail are a necessity in this region (Plate 12) They could be used in forming a loop walk, (Trail C, Figure 4,) up to and along a dry ridge east of the Whitworth Trail. This ridge offers a panoramic view of the Skagit Valley which could easily be accessible to those using the Whitworth Campsite.

The proposed trail A, following the west side of the river would connect with the Galene Creek Trail (Plate 13; Part 1) leading into the alpine country. No provision for access should be provided from the east side of the Skagit River. Any boat traffic across the river may be a hazard to river canoeists.

If it is felt that the old sawmill ruins should be interpreted on site, then the secondary road to the ruins, (Figure 4), would need improving. Outdoor display signs could be used to tell the story of previous logging operations and of man's attempt to create an artificial meadow (Slaney's Mitigation Meadow) to supplement deer spring feeding areas.

The Galene Creek trail at present is only accessible by crossing the river at the end of the garbage dump road. The trail is initially difficult to find and should be flagged immediately. The trail follows an old caterpillar tractor trail which has since been heavily eroded, thus making walking difficult. The first part of this trail needs to be rebuilt. The trail, otherwise, is in good condition with few deadfalls and washouts. The creek crossings should be made less hazardous by the use of footbridges (at least 4 are needed.)

Nature House

With the spectacular mountain views, the highly diversified habitats close at hand and the proposed extensive camping areas, this region is an ideal location for a nature house in the Skagit Valley Recreation Area. The nature house should be situated at the edge of the Whitworth Meadow amongst the trees. A parking lot could be constructed in a road clearing nearby. The type of nature house construction could be similar to that of Manning Park; accommodation for naturalists must be provided in the near vicinity.

Other Considerations

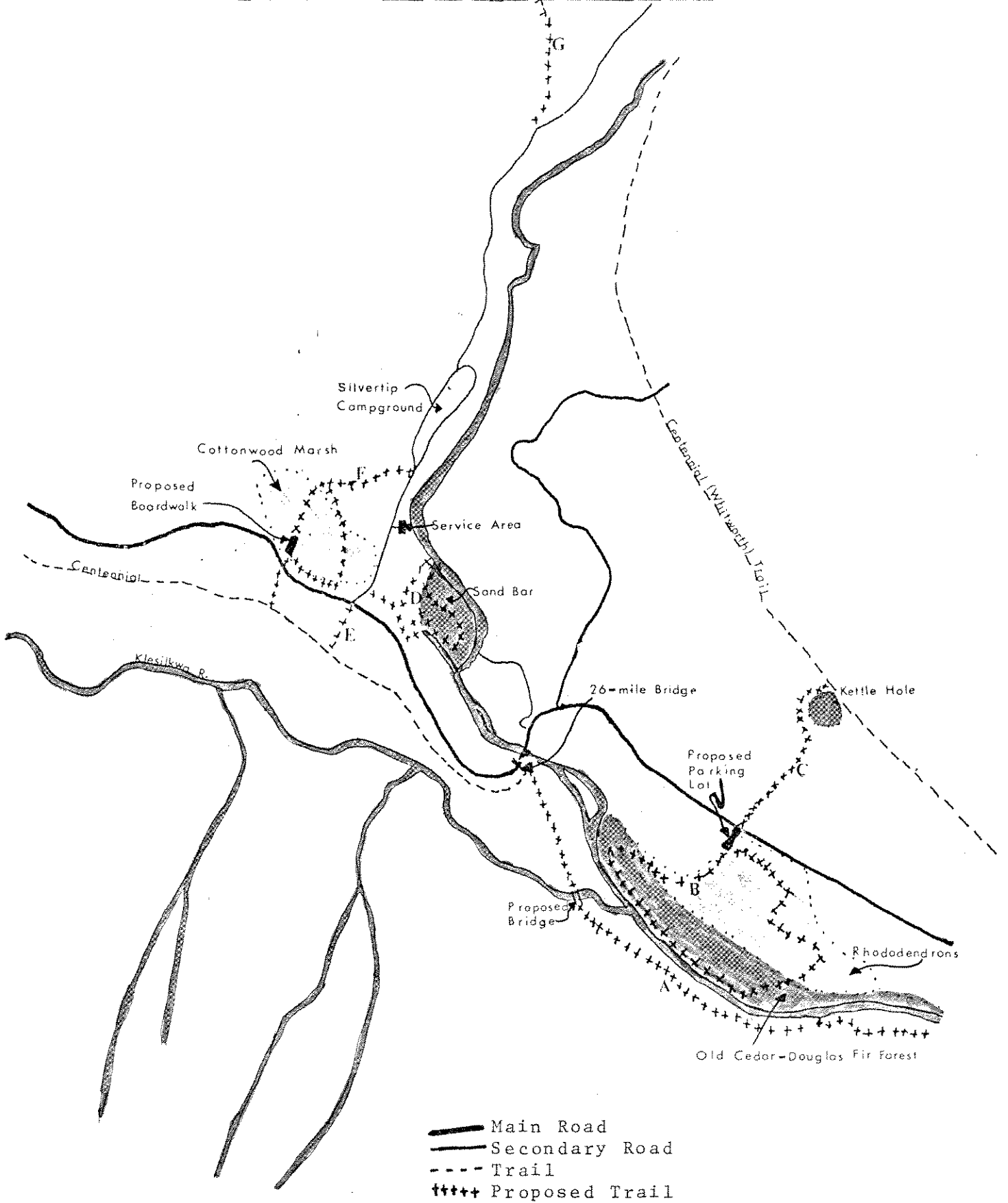
The eastern access road to the Whitworth meadow should be blocked off completely. Access should only be allowed by the northern access road. This measure would cause less disturbance to the local deer population. The site of the present garbage dump could also pose a problem in future by concentrating the bears near to a major campsite

When the major campsite has been developed, the garbage should be trucked into Hope for disposal as is done in Manning Park.

Signs

An outdoor sign showing the location of trails and roads in the region should be placed near the Nature House. An outdoor sign could also be placed near the foundations of the old Whitworth ranch-house telling of man's history in the Whitworth Meadow.

Figure 5: Silvertip Campsite Region



- Main Road
- Secondary Road
- - - Trail
- + + + + Proposed Trail

0 ————— 1
Scale in Miles

4. The Silvertip Region (Figure 5)

The most notable features in this area include the sedge covered kettle hole, the rhododendrons, the cottonwood groves, the talus slopes of the upper Skagit and the western red cedar-Douglas-fir climax association by the Skagit River.

INTERPRETATION THEMES

- rhododendrons (Plate 23, Part 1): the requirements for their growth, such as well drained soil; the nature of propagation (usually vegetatively); the uniqueness of this species in British Columbia.
- other flora: the unique occurrence of salal in the area; the wide variety of ferns, especially along the Skagit Trail.
- the correlation of floristic changes with the differing surficial geology: fast draining gravel outwash terraces produce a dry habitat, where rhododendrons, lodgepole pine and Douglas fir may grow, whereas on recent floodplains, large virgin western red cedar and Douglas-fir are abundant and rhododendrons and lodgepole pine are absent.
- the formation of a marsh; the tolerance of cottonwoods to having their lower trunks submerged in water for part of the year.
- the unique bird fauna associated with marshes; i.e. redwing blackbirds, song sparrows and numerous warblers.
- mammals such as racoons and bats which are active in these areas at night.
- the formation of talus slopes and how this special habitat satisfies the niche requirements of the pika, sparrow hawk, alligator lizard and spotted saxifrage amongst others.
- kettle hole formation and subsequent plant succession.
- forestry interpretation: replanting with Douglas-fir of recently logged region by the entrance of the Recreation Area; implications of replanting on natural regeneration and forest successional stages.

INTERPRETATIVE PLAN

The Silvertip Campground and the 26-mile bridge are the two areas where people tend to congregate in this region.

Accommodation

The Silvertip Campground has about 40 units which, at present, are lightly used but in future years, as demand for camping space increases, this area may become used more heavily.

Trails

The Silvertip campground could become the center for hiking activity in the Skagit Valley. The proposed west Skagit Trail (A) will terminate at the 26-mile bridge at the same point as the Centennial Trail. The footbridge over the Klesilkwa is a necessity. Other access points from the campsite to the Centennial Trail should be provided as shown (E) and (F). The cottonwood marsh walk (F) could be developed as either a self-guiding nature trail or a naturalist walk trail. One or more boardwalks will be necessary to traverse the marsh. This trail would be especially interesting for bird watchers and insect watchers (the mosquitoes are unbelievable). The other proposed nature trail (D) would be useful for interpreting riverine regeneration and sand bar ecology. This would be most suited to a self-guiding nature trail. One of the top priority long distance trails required would be the Silvertip Mountain (G) trail (Plate 14) following up the Silvertip Creek to the alpine country. On the east side of the Skagit River, another connector trail (C) to the Whitworth trail is necessary. This trail could leave from the bulldozed area which is proposed as a parking lot. The trail should then approach the kettle hole and skirt around its periphery to join with the Whitworth Trail. This connector trail location is desired since there is both parking close at hand and a much shorter distance involved in reaching the Whitworth trail than if the present rather uninteresting secondary access road is used. By far one of the most picturesque and floristically important nature trails is B. Here one travels from dense rhododendron areas through an open mixed lodgepole pine and Douglas-fir forest to immense cedar and Douglas-fir trees bordering the river. This trail is best interpreted as a self-guiding nature trail. In the



Plate 14. Waterfall of an unnamed creek draining Silvertip Mountain. This creek is on the route of a proposed nature trail.



Plate 15. The logged over area at the head of Shawatum Creek. Such operations may seriously affect the runoff of creeks.



Plate 16. A new slough being formed by the runaway waters of Shawatum Creek.

parking lot a large outdoor display sign should depict the life history and significance of the rhododendron as in the rhododendron display in Manning Park.

Canoeing

The Skagit River offers some of the finest river canoeing in the lower mainland to experienced river canoeists. The experience felt in canoeing the Skagit is totally different from any other that may be obtained in any other recreational pursuit in the Valley. To maximize the Skagit River for canoeing, all log jams from the 26-mile bridge to the major jam south of the Whitworth meadow region should be removed. This latter jam should remain because it is so well entrenched as to be extremely difficult to remove without major damage to the gravel bars. The river should be marked with a large red triangle at the point where the canoe portage should begin. All jams below this point to Chittenden's bridge should also be removed. The river must be examined each year after the spring floodwaters have passed so that newly formed jams may be removed. Interpretive canoe trips along the river are possible as long as all the canoeists go into a backwater area or pull up to the shore before the naturalist tells any particular story. Some spontaneity in bird observation and plant spotting is lost because these would not be easily pointed out to all while on the move. Canoe removal should be on the north west side of Chittenden's bridge where an access road already exists. The canoes could then be carried across the bridge to cars on the other side (in the event that vehicle access to the west side of the Skagit River will be restricted).

Other considerations

The two roads on the left side of the main road just across the 26-mile bridge should be blocked off except for limited access to the river immediately north of the 26-mile bridge where canoes may be launched. Camping should not be allowed in this area by the river.

C. Other Regions of Interpretive Importance within the Recreation Area

1. The Upper Skagit

The stretch of river between the 26-mile bridge and Manning Park is one of the most scenic in the Recreation Area. The Whitworth trail that follows along this course is the only development which need be maintained. A wilderness campsite is being considered about half way between the 26-mile bridge and the Hope-Princeton highway (Turner, pers. comm.), but if the major campsite development proceeds in the northern portion of the Skagit River then a Wilderness camping area is not really necessary. The cabin along the trail is probably adequate for people caught out after dark in the area.

The proposed campsite development at the north end of the Skagit Recreation Area, at the junction of the Skagit and Sumallo Rivers, is located in a logged over area which is perfectly reasonable from an Interpretation point of view. Unfortunately the access to this campsite area passes through one of the finest stands of Douglas-fir and western red cedar in Manning Park. If the proposed campsite is to be greater than 50 units, then the present access road would not be adequate. In this case no trees whatever should be removed to improve access or else the windfall hazard would be increased. A small campsite with restricted access might be a suitable compromise if a campsite is absolutely necessary here. A better alternative might be to select an alternative access road to the proposed campground - one which does not penetrate the large tree stand. In the latter event the existing road through the forest stand could be scarified and the stand left intact.

In any event, before any development within, or improved access through this stand is carried out a thorough ecological study of the stand should be conducted - similar to the study presently being carried out for Cathedral Grove in MacMillan Park.

2. The Klesilkwa Bluffs

A scenic trail is proposed to travel up along the unnamed creek that tumbles down the steep valley side. The trail could switchback up onto the bluffs from which an excellent view is afforded of the Klesilkwa beaver marshes (Plate 17 & 18) and the northern part of the Skagit Valley by the 26-mile bridge. The dry rocky outcrop is dominated by a moss and lichen covering with gnarled Douglas-fir (Plate 19). This trail should continue to parallel the Klesilkwa Valley at this

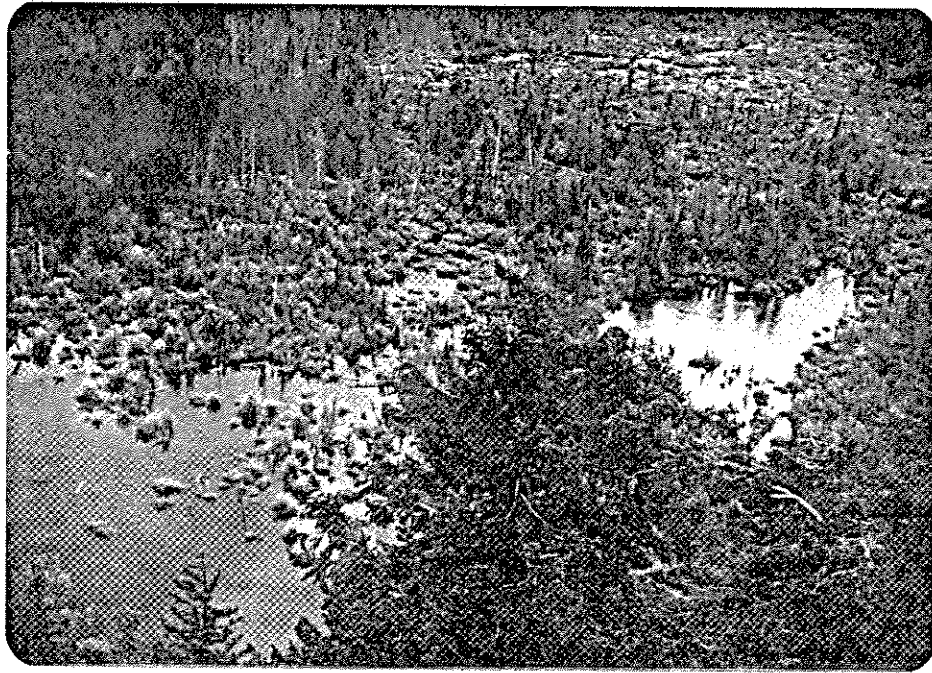


Plate 17. The beaver meadows of the Klesilkwa River from the rocky bluff of the proposed trail.

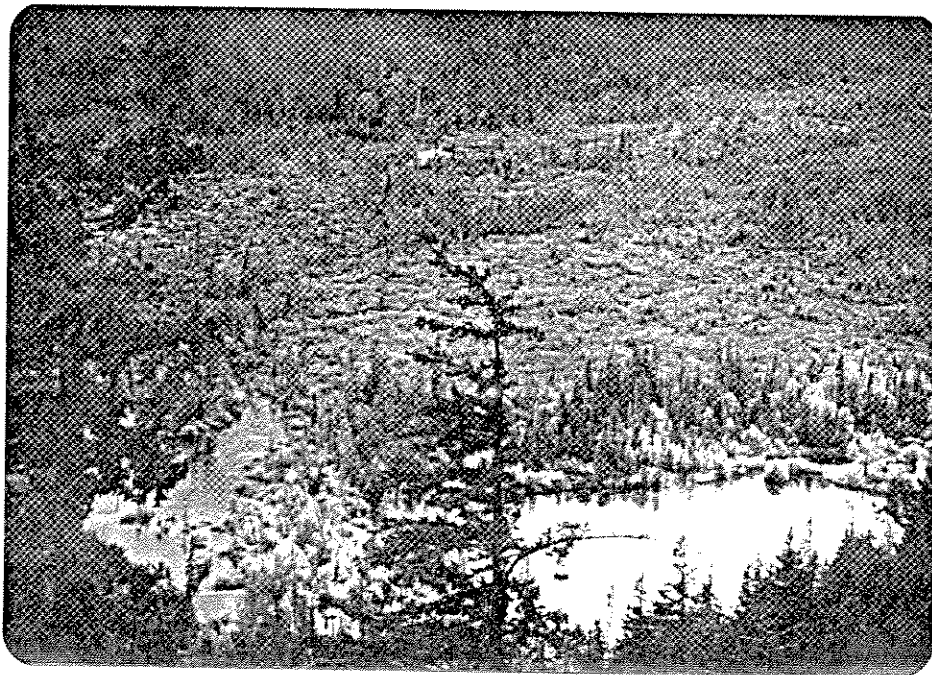


Plate 18. Another view of the beaver meadow showing areas of recent logging.



Plate 19. Douglas fir on dry rocky outcrop above Klesilkwa beaver meadows.

elevation until the western boundary of the Recreation Area is reached. The trail may then descend through a draw and angle east down along a steep, logged and recently replanted area to the valley bottom.

The flat region of the recently logged area is an excellent place for a campsite location for winter use. There is a creek nearby and access roads already available. It is entirely reasonable to keep the main road open to this point during winter. Owing to the increasing popularity of cross-country skiing, such a facility, if properly advertised, may be heavily used. The Skagit Valley has tremendous possibilities for this sport both because of the extensive flat areas in the valley bottom and the proposed interconnecting trail system and the many logging roads.

E. Recommendations

The following is a summary of recommendations presented in the Interpretive Plan.

1. Ross Lake Region (east of the Skagit River)

a. Specific Interpretation Recommendations

- A self-guiding nature trail to Chittenden's Bluff to be constructed, as the ecology of this area is similar to that of the Ponderosa Pine Ecological Reserve and could serve as an alternative area for visitor use.
- Several shorter trails for interpretation purposes to be built. These are:
 1. A loop trail through the Cat-tail marsh (Trail B Fig. 2)
 2. A loop trail through the cottonwood forest (Trail C Fig. 2)
 3. A streamside loop trail (Trail E Fig. 2).
- Outdoor display panels having maps of the trails and roads of the whole Ross Lake region, including the west side of the river, should be sited in the Ross Lake high use area.
- An amphitheatre to be built in the Ross Lake Region, the location of which is to be determined after the approval of campground locations.

b. General Recommendations

- Damage to the Ponderosa Pine Ecological Reserve could occur due to the close proximity of the planned campsite development east of the main road. Before any campsite approval is undertaken this matter should be resolved through discussions between Planning, Interpretation and the Ecological Reserves Committee.
- The trail to the Ponderosa Pine Ecological Reserve should be blocked off to discourage access by visitors.
- At the time of campsite completion a trail should be constructed from the campsite area to the junction of Centennial (Whitworth) and the Skyline Trail.
- Continued use of Curly Brown's Meadow (Cedar Hollow) for group camping is inadvisable as this is an important feeding area for the resident deer population.
- Stumps should be removed from the swimming area and Ross Lake but retained in the marsh area as a subject for interpretation.

- Recommendations should be sent through proper channels to insure that Seattle City Light adheres to the agreement to remove surface debris that restricts recreational use of the lake.
- Motor boats should be prevented from entering the proposed swimming area and also restricted around the river mouth and lower 1/2 mile of the river.

2. Ross Lake Region (west side of the Skagit River)

a. Specific Interpretation Recommendations

- A self-guiding nature trail to be constructed in the Ponderosa Meadow area (Trail B, Figure 3).
- An outdoor display panel, depicting the uniqueness of the ponderosa pine in this area to be sited at the crossroads on the north end of the Ponderosa Meadow.
- Deer blinds to be erected in the Ponderosa Meadow area so that the animals may be observed while feeding.
- Interpretive canoe trips to be conducted along the northern shore of Ross Lake and up to the first log-jam.

b. General Recommendations

- A hiking trail from Ross Lake to the 26-mile bridge following the length of the Skagit River should be constructed. This trail should touch the riverbank only intermittently for maintenance of river aesthetics and so as not to put increased pressure from use by fishermen upon the fishery. A foot-bridge would have to be built over the Klesilkwa River.
- Several wilderness campsites could be located along the river trail.
- There should be a small wilderness camp for boaters on the west side of the lake near the International Border subject to resolving the problem of the increased fire hazard.
- No camping except for wilderness camping should be allowed on the west side of the river.
- Chittenden's Bridge should be blocked off to restrict the access of public vehicles to the west side of the river.

3. The Whitworth Meadow Region

a. Specific Interpretation Recommendations

- If an extensive camping area is to be constructed in this region, a nature house situated on the edge of Whitworth Meadow and similar in construction to the one in Manning Park should be built.
- An outdoor sign showing the trails and roads of the region should be placed near the nature house.
- An outdoor display panel near the foundation of the old Whitworth Ranch house to depict the human history of the region.
- Several nature trails to be built in the region.
 - i. The beaver marsh trail (Trail B, Figure 4)
 - ii. The kettle hole nature trail (Trail D, Figure 4)

b. General Recommendations

- The connecting trail to Centennial Trail. This would make Centennial Trail more accessible from the proposed campsite. The trail should continue over the dry ridge viewpoint and back down to Centennial Trail to form a loop. (Trail C, Figure 4).
- The plaques on Centennial Trail should be removed as they are an eyesore, and the trail should be renamed Whitworth Trail to commemorate the people who built it.
- The beginning of the Galene Creek Trail should be flagged immediately as it is difficult to find. The trail should be rebuilt in places and some footbridges are necessary.
- No access to the riverside trail on the west bank of the Skagit should be provided in this region.
- The location of the garbage dump poses a problem by concentrating bears near a major campsite. Garbage should be trucked in to Hope as is done in Manning Park.
- The eastern access road to Whitworth Meadow should be closed to vehicular traffic permitting access via the northern road only.

4. The Silvertip Campsite Regiona. Specific Interpretation Recommendations

- A number of nature trails to be constructed in this area. These are:
 - i. The cottonwood marsh trail (Trail F, Figure 5)
 - ii. Trail B through the rhododendron area.
 - iii. Trail D through the sand bar.
 - iv. The Silvertip Mountain trail (Trail G)
 - v. The kettle hole trail (Trail C). This trail could serve to shorten the distance involved in reaching the Centennial (Whitworth) Trail.
- A large outdoor display panel to be erected in the proposed parking lot depicting the life history and significance of the rhododendron.

b. General Recommendations

- Two access trails, E and F, should be built from the Silvertip Campsite to the Centennial Trail on the west side of the Skagit River.
- All log jams from 26 mile bridge to Chittenden's Bridge, except for the major jam south of Whitworth Meadow, should be removed.
- The river should be examined each year after spring floods in order to remove any new jams which may have formed.
- The two roads immediately north of 26 mile bridge should be blocked to vehicular traffic with limited access on the shorter one, to facilitate the launching of canoes.

5. Other regions within the Skagit Valley Recreation Area

- a) If possible, an alternative access road to the proposed Skagit-Sumallo junction campground should be selected. As it is an important interpretive area, which can be damaged by erosive penetration, the large western red cedar - Douglas fir forest should remain intact. Should development within or through this stand be contemplated then a thorough ecological study of the stand should first be carried out to assess the implications to the stand.

b) The Klesilkwa Bluffs

- A scenic trail should be constructed up to the Klesilkwa Bluffs.
- The area of recent logging in the Klesilkwa Valley bottom would make an excellent winter campsite location.
- The main road should be kept open to this point during the winter, to enable cross-country skiers to utilize the logging roads and proposed trails of the whole Skagit Valley Recreation Area.

REFERENCES

Turner, Mel. 1975. Personal Communication. Planning Division, B.C. Parks Branch, Dept. of Recreation and Conservation.

Spriggs, Bill, 1975. Personal communication. Planning Division, B.C. Parks Branch, Department of Recreation and Conservation.