

## North Cascades and Harts Pass/Golden Horn Area Fact Sheet



### Background:

The beautiful North Cascades offers world-class scenic beauty and abundant opportunities for outdoor activities. West of Winthrop Washington, the area famous for its mountain peaks and diverse wildlife is managed by both the US Forest Service and the National Park Service.

The Forest Service's Methow Valley Ranger District manages about 200,000 acres of the North Cascades, from the National Forest boundary near Early Winters to approximately three miles west of the Canyon Creek Trailhead and north to the boundary of the Pasayten Wilderness. To the west is the Ross Lake National Recreation area managed by the National Park Service.

The scenic North Cascades and Harts Pass/Golden Horn area is a treasure to residents and visitors alike; for its pristine beauty and recreation opportunities. The Forest Service shares in viewing the North Cascades as a treasure; their management strategies for these valued public lands focus on retaining the scenic quality while managing for the many recreation opportunities found there.

"It's important that the Forest Service care for these and all public lands in collaboration with the people we serve," said Michael Liu, Methow Valley District Ranger. "That's our motto, to care for the land and serve the people."

Along the North Cascades Scenic Highway, National Forest lands are currently managed to preserve the high quality scenic setting while providing recreation opportunities. The current Land and Resource Management Plan for the Forest calls for preserving "the existing scenic values of the area while allowing for

moderate expansion of recreation facilities with an emphasis on day use and short duration stay opportunities". Harts Pass/Golden Horn, to the north, is managed as a semi-primitive, non-motorized area. The Forest Service has been managing public lands in the North Cascades and Harts Pass/Golden Horn area since 1910.

### Questions & Answers

#### What measures are in place to preserve the scenic values of the North Cascades Scenic Highway?

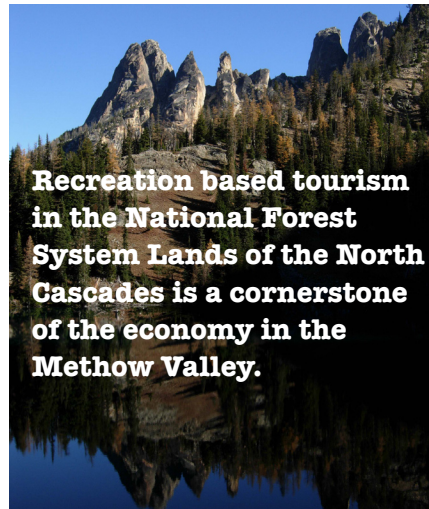
Domestic livestock grazing is not permitted.

Motorized vehicles are prohibited on all trails.

Timber harvest is not permitted, however selective vegetation management is allowed to enhance scenery or recreation opportunities, or to remove hazard trees at developed sites.

Utility structures are not permitted except under limited circumstances and must be consistent with visual and recreation objectives.

New road construction will only be allowed to access new recreation sites or to provide reasonable access to minerals claims.



#### What does it mean that the Harts Pass/Golden Horn area is managed "semi-primitive, non-motorized"?

The Forest Plan requires management for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities during summer and fall seasons. Motorized vehicles are not allowed on trails in this area.

Semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunities, like snowmobiling and helicopter assisted skiing occur during the winter and spring seasons.

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The area is characterized by a predominantly naturally appearing environment. Visitors have a high probability of experiencing isolation, closeness to nature, tranquility and self reliance through application of outdoor skills in an environment that offers challenge and risk.

### **What recreation activities are permitted under the current designation?**

The Forest Service administers a portion of the North Cascades that offers a wide spectrum of recreation opportunities, from family friendly easy hikes along the highway corridor, to more difficult, highly technical backcountry rock climbing and backpacking. Dogs, under control of their owner, are welcome on Forest Service trails. Roughly half of the trails that begin along the North Cascades Scenic Highway are closed to recreational stock.

Forest service operates and maintains 9 trailheads in the highway corridor, 3 campgrounds, and The Washington Pass Overlook. The Harts Pass area has 2 campgrounds and 5 trailheads. The Forest Service maintains about 100 miles of trail in the area, including the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. The trails range from fully accessible to technically difficult. There are approximately 72,000 visitors to the area each summer, with snowmobiling and backcountry skiing in the winter.

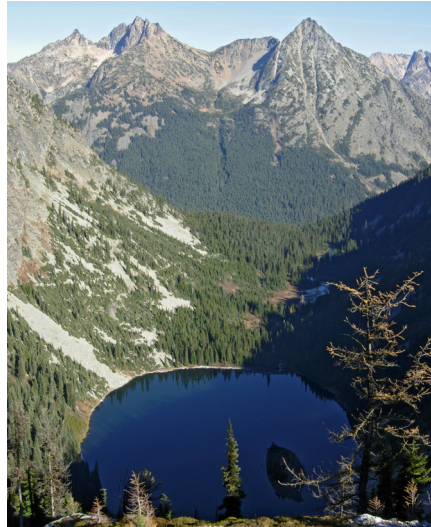
Commercial backpacking, back country skiing, helicopter assisted skiing, paragliding, rock climbing and saddle stock outfitter guides take people into the North Cascades each year.

There are isolated recreational mining claims. Mineral withdrawal along the North Cascades Scenic Highway protects scenic recreation aquatic and plant values.

### **Would hydroelectric dams be allowed in the waterways of the North Cascades?**

Methow River, Early Winters Creek, Granite Creek, and Ruby Creek are all candidate rivers for Wild and Scenic River Designation and provide critical habitat for threatened and endangered fish. The Wild and

Scenic Rivers Act prohibits federal support for actions such as the construction of dams or other instream activities that would harm the rivers free flowing condition, water quality or outstanding resource values. As candidate Wild and Scenic Rivers, the Forest Service will manage them according to the direction for Wild and Scenic Rivers until a determination has been made by Congress. Construction of Dams in these waterways would not be consistent with the Endangered Species Act's provision to protect this habitat.



### **Is this a Wilderness Area?**

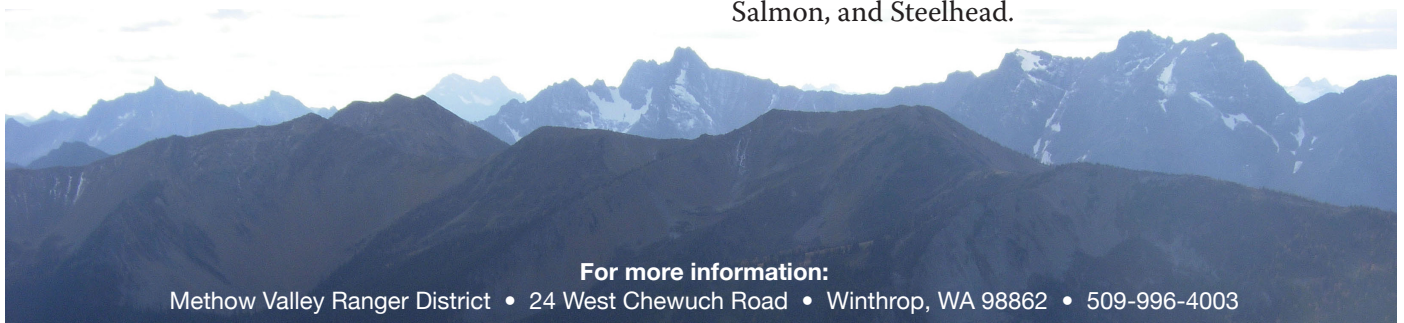
Wilderness Areas are designated by Congress. The Harts Pass/Golden Horn area is being evaluated for possible recommendation as Wilderness to Congress in the current Forest Plan revision.

### **What information resources does the Forest Service have in place for visitors to the North Cascades?**

The Methow Valley Ranger District in Winthrop and several interpretive sites along the North Cascades Scenic Highway are maintained by the Forest Service. In addition, the agency is working on improvements at the Washington Pass overlook to provide interpretive information.

### **Which Threatened/Endangered wildlife species are managed for in the North Cascades?**

Grizzly Bear, Grey Wolf, Bull Trout, Canadian Lynx, Mountain Goats, Spotted Owl, Bald Eagle, Chinook Salmon, and Steelhead.



**For more information:**

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