

Fall 2001

# The Planet, 2001, Spring

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BLANCHARD  
MOUNTAIN  
the planet  
SPRING 2001



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(Cover) photo by Chris Goodenow. Fog obscures a sunrise at Blanchard Mountain.

(back cover) photo illustration

Americans put a price on everything. But some things are worthwhile simply because they exist. Blanchard Mountain, the only part of the Cascade Range that touches the sea, is one of those places.

We consume our natural resources in the forms of oil, timber and water, at a voracious rate. Often, we are not alarmed because we, as a species, are so ingenious we will simply find alternatives to these resources when they run out.

My response is to ask what we are waiting for. Why don't we find those sources now? Why not invest our efforts into new ways of utilizing and conserving resources rather than getting worked up over the loss of the old ones? Why not save some of the land and species these materials reside in or around that are perhaps just as worthwhile?

Blanchard Mountain is an example of larger societal issues: loss and worth of green space, continuing urban sprawl, management of public and private lands. The Planet staff deals with some of these issues explicitly, some not. But Blanchard Mountain's future lies against a backdrop of these larger issues. We want green space — we crave it, we want to escape into our regional parks and our backyards. Blanchard Mountain, for Bellingham, is a bit of both. At the same time, we want jobs that pay a living wage. We need paper and wood products, and the timber, pulp and land management industries in this country employ 1.2 million people.

• So where do we draw the line? In some ways, the management of Blanchard Mountain has become controversial simply because the people of this community like it. People do not necessarily want to save Blanchard because it is ecologically diverse or because endangered species live there or because it is the last possible chance for a significant corridor between the Cascades and the sea, though all those things may be true. They want Blanchard Mountain protected because they like to spend time there.

This is not as noble a cause as, say, saving endangered whales. We use this mountain in a way that we do not use endangered species. But this decision represents a responsibility and knowledge that we need nature.

Perhaps we are not always able to articulate it, but many people feel we should strike a balance between production and aesthetics. For the last 150 years, the economic bottom line has been the deciding factor for everything. Perhaps now, in this time of unparalleled wealth and prosperity, we can find some sane, fair way to simply decide — to say we love this land as it is, and we will simply have to find alternative resources.

Our world is changing and with that comes the need for adaptation. In the same way this community is reassigning the value of a mountain, Americans need to reassess their own values. It would be ridiculous and hypocritical for any of us to say timber harvest must stop completely. What we can do is evaluate our insatiable need for wood and wood products and find other, more sustainable alternatives, so we can leave natural places as they are. We can use less and recycle more.

If we can change our estimation of the value and use of a mountain, perhaps we can learn that there is more than one way to live. We need to start planning, not for the next year, but for the next century. We can assess what we would like to keep and what is expendable, by urban and resource planning, by setting aside corridors, habitats for large carnivores, green space, and wilderness. Instead of waiting until resources run out, or are threatened, we can make rational decisions and plans that reflect not just the short-term bottom line. We find many other things worthwhile — clean air and water, jobs and a place for other species to live. Even if we can't put a monetary price on it, that's okay. We usually cannot put a price on the most precious aspects of our lives.

—Tiffany Campbell, editor

The Planet is the student-produced quarterly magazine of Huxley College of the Environment. We are dedicated to environmental advocacy and awareness through responsible journalism.

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BY MATT WILLIAMS



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# WELCOME TO BLANCHARD MOUNTAIN

*By Matt Williams*

*Photos by Chris Goodenow*

Blanchard Mountain stands stonily at the shore, the waves of Samish Bay lapping gently at its foot. From the bulbous rocky outcrop of Oyster Dome the mountain falls sharply to Chuckanut Drive and the shoreline below.

The mountain is capped with a verdant second-growth forest that hosts a multitude of wildlife as well as recreation seekers — from hikers to horsemen and hanggliders who jump off the steep west face to catch the gentle Washington winds.

A rare 2,000-foot peak situated directly on the coastline, Blanchard Mountain encompasses some 4,500 acres, the topmost 3,000 of which are covered with a burgeoning mature forest, said Frank Ancock, a local historian and member of the Mount Baker Chapter of the Sierra Club.

"It's [the Sierra Club's] hope that in 70 years you'll be able to come here and walk through something resembling an ancient forest," Ancock said.

But for all the beauty Blanchard Mountain has to offer, a looming controversy surrounds it today. Clearcuts cover the sides of the mountain where the forest has been logged in sections since the late 19th century.

This controversy hinges on the answer to a single question: should logging continue, or is there a better way to manage Blanchard Mountain for the good of the people of Washington state?

Groups like the Northwest Ecosystem Alliance and the Mount Baker Chapter of the Sierra Club push for alternative management involving preservation. Beneficiaries of the current state trust land management policies, however, continually demand a fresh harvest.

The 3,000 acres in question lay atop the mountain above an old gravel logging road. The road not only provides access to the mountain's recreational possibilities, but serves as a border dividing two very different Blanchard Mountains. Below the road, patches of forest — all of different ages and height, sometimes nothing more than debris left in a swath of cleared land — cover the mountainside like a haphazard quilt. Above the road stands a unique, mature forest that hasn't been logged since the first half of the 20th century and has never been clear-cut.

The youngest part of the forest was logged in 1950, but according to maps published by the Department of Natural Resources, most of the green expanse is 70 to 80 years old.

The fact that the forest on Blanchard Mountain is comprised of both younger and older trees and has recovered naturally rather than as a genetically engineered tree farm, means it is slowly becoming an old-growth forest via natural processes, said Ann Eissinger, a local biologist.





Photos from left to right: A.L.R.T. logger Frank Cain, Jr. proudly shows off his logging tattoo amidst a forest above Acme presently being logged. Lizard Lake and Lily Lake contribute to the ecological diversity of Blanchard Mountain. Remnants of a fallen tree loom over one of Blanchard Mountain's popular trails at dusk. Clearcuts are an occasional scene on Blanchard Mountain, leaving a patch of landscape vacant and sparing a few leave trees that are likely to blow over.

“As a young girl, I could go into the nearby woods and walk into an old-growth cathedral,” Eissinger said. “You just can’t do that anymore. We had a chance to do preservation. In my lifetime we had that chance. Now, though, we have to do restoration [almost exclusively], but here at Blanchard we have a rare chance to preserve something beautiful.”

On one hand, the forest’s age makes it a unique and popular recreation spot, on the other, it means the forest is ripe for harvest again. Much of Blanchard Mountain is Washington State Trust Land, meaning it is owned by the people of Washington state and managed by the government to generate revenue for state programs like the public school system.

Revenue from harvests on state trust lands provided 37 percent of funds for state matching grants for school construction in the 2000 fiscal year, said Brenda Hood of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Much of the money generated by the management of Blanchard Mountain, however, does not go into the state funds. Instead, it goes directly to local institutions like the Burlington-Edison School District and the Skagit County Fire Department.

Groups like the NWEA aren’t calling for the elimination of these funds, rather, they argue that more efficient ways of generating revenue exist, which don’t involve logging valuable natural areas such as Blanchard Mountain.

The DNR faces a decision to either continue logging Blanchard Mountain, or to change its policy and preserve the mountain in some way. One of several proposed options is to designate the mountain as a Natural Resource Conservation Area — a program that protects areas that have unique natural resources valuable to wildlife and humans alike.

To facilitate that decision, Resources Northwest Consultants prepared and presented an assessment of Blanchard Mountain’s natural resources to the DNR in September of 1999.

The assessment found Blanchard Mountain to be of unique ecological value in a multitude of ways. Foremost is the fact

THE CONTROVERSY HINGES ON THE ANSWER TO A SINGLE QUESTION: SHOULD LOGGING CONTINUE, OR IS THERE A BETTER WAY TO MANAGE BLANCHARD MOUNTAIN FOR THE GOOD OF THE PEOPLE OF WASHINGTON STATE?







that the 3,000-acre forest atop the mountain was selectively logged over a half century ago and then abandoned. This allowed the stand of woods to mature naturally, creating a forest comprised of trees varying from 50 to 200 years old.

This makes for valuable and unique wildlife habitat, Eissinger said. Eissinger runs Nahkeeta Northwest Wildlife Services in the town of Bow, Wash. just south of Blanchard Mountain. She coauthored the 1999 assessment and said it is rare to find natural second growth like that on top of Blanchard Mountain.

Clear-cutting broad swaths of land and replanting them with genetically engineered Douglas fir trees — the standard practice on other such state and private tree farms — creates stale, unnatural forests that cannot support a full compliment of wildlife, Eissinger said. This practice changes the habitat radically, which can make it difficult or impossible for some species to adapt, she said.

At the southern end of the Chuckanut Mountain range, just south of Larrabee State Park, the mountain commands an excellent view in all directions: to the north, the green hills of the Chuckanuts roll toward Bellingham; to the west, the remarkable San Juan Islands garnish the placid waters of Samish Bay; to the south stretch the broad Samish Flats and the communities of Blanchard, Bow and Edison; to the east, an undeveloped corridor of wilderness leads directly back to the icy peaks of Mount Baker and the North Cascades.

Blanchard Mountain is one of very few places where a mountain not only meets the shoreline, but also is the shoreline. From the water's edge, it rises up to more than 2,000 feet and is the beginning of a valuable corridor linking the Cascade Mountains with the Salish Sea, a group of water systems that stretches from Puget Sound in the south to the Strait of Juan de Fuca in the north.

"That's a particularly rare connection that needs to be preserved," Eissinger said. "Blanchard alone won't support a full compliment of species — you need corridors."

According to the Blanchard Mountain assessment, the mountain has a "high diversity of species" for northwest Washington and that "This diversity and species richness includes unique concentrations of vertebrate and invertebrate groups."

Approximately 227 vertebrate species use and inhabit Blanchard Mountain. Five of those species, including the marbled murrelet and bald eagle, are listed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as endangered or threatened in Washington state.

In the assessment, the authors proposed approximately 3,000 acres atop Blanchard Mountain be made a Natural Resource Conservation Area and be linked to Larrabee State Park.

Eissinger, however, thinks that is not enough, claiming one of the great failings of the park system is that it often separates coastal and inland areas. She said Olympic National Park on the Olympic Peninsula here in Washington state is a prime example.

The Olympic National Park is primarily comprised of the Olympic Mountains at the inland heart of the peninsula and of coastal land, but between the two areas no physical connection exists. Separating the sections with human development, broad swaths of clear-cut land and highways is

counterproductive, she said. Washington state is unique in that it not only acts as a seasonal home to migratory animals that travel north and south with the seasons, but is also a year-round home to species that migrate latitudinally like elk and deer.

For these animals that migrate from the inland mountains, corridors between the cascades and the sea are vital, and Blanchard Mountain is part of only two remaining corridors in Washington, Eissinger said. The other is the Nisqually river valley, which Eissinger said is rapidly succumbing to human development.

With all the arguments and proffered information about the mountain's value,

the state is faced with a decision that not only holds within it the fate of Blanchard Mountain, but has bearing on how the DNR will manage all state trust lands in the future.

"WE HAD A CHANCE TO DO PRESERVATION. IN MY LIFETIME WE HAD THAT CHANCE. NOW, THOUGH, WE HAVE TO DO RESTORATION [ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY]. BUT HERE AT BLANCHARD WE HAVE A RARE CHANCE TO PRESERVE SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL."

—Ann Eissinger, biologist

(Top left) Local biologist Ann Eissinger is an advocate for preserving Blanchard Mountain's current ecosystem and letting it reach a stage of old growth.



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Sources: 2-6, 8-10, 18-19, Washington State Department of Natural Resources; 7, Washington Forest Protection Association; 12-16, 20-22, American Forest Resource Council; 17, Native Forests Council.





# PAPER TRAILS

*By Grant Brissey*

*Photos by Chris Goodenow*





Ron Rhoades steps off the logging road and eases down an embankment into knee-high underbrush. He strolls through the soft ground cover of shrubs and rotting branches as confidently as if it was a city sidewalk.

Rhoades, a forester for the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, helps oversee the final stages of DNR timber harvest contracts on state-managed lands, such as Blanchard Mountain. Some state managed lands, called state trust lands, generate revenue for, among others, state and county schools, fire districts and county road funds.

While no one doubts that state and county institutions need funding, opposition is increasing to the way state trust lands generate some of that funding. The state's constitution specifically declares that "public lands granted to the state are held in trust for all the people," but critics argue that the lands now generate funds for only specific beneficiaries, which do not accurately represent the constituency of Washington state. Meanwhile, the state trust lands struggle to provide revenue for the institutions of a state that is much more densely populated than when the system was devised.

Rhoades approaches the stream on the right flank of a unit of land he is helping to prepare for a pending DNR sale. He takes out an electronic range finder and surveys the proper distance for a stream buffer — a protective layer of trees left standing on either side of a stream in an attempt to maintain its natural environment after the area is logged.

"Feel the cool air here?" he asks as he maneuvers his way up the other side of the stream bank. "That's what the buffer is trying to maintain."

As a forester for the DNR, Rhoades has several duties in a timber sale process. He looks at locations for short spurs — the access roads logging companies will use to harvest the contracted piece of land. He lays out stream and wetland buffers and generally monitors the land for ecological conditions that could impede the harvest. He looks at the physical characteristics of the land, such as instabilities of slope soils and stream banks. He monitors the potential for threatened or endangered species habitat. He calculates whether or not the profit of the sale will cover the costs of road building and other operating expenses.

Rhoades doesn't do all of this alone, however. Throughout the duration of the sale process, a team of geologists, biologists and engineers will look at every aspect of the land. They survey the area to make sure its harvest will not violate the regulations outlined in the Habitat Conservation Plan — the federally endorsed environmental supplement to the Forest Resource Plan, which is the DNR's guidebook on forest management policy.

"Every time we're crossing a stream, we're looking, looking, looking," Rhoades said as he pointed downstream and then to both banks. "By the time a sale gets to me, it's in its fifth year of planning. If I can't stop it, then we have a sale."

Rhoades also helps evaluate which logging method will yield the most timber on a given sale. After the team verifies that a site passes all of the environmental regulations outlined in the Forest Resource Plan and the Habitat Conservation Plan, it's time to decide how the timber will be harvested. He said if they can't build roads to the site they will sometimes use helicopters to haul the timber from the harvest.

"Whatever will get the most volume out of a sale will dictate how we harvest it," Rhoades said. "It really doesn't matter as long as we do what is required of us."

### History

With the creation of Washington Territory in 1853, the federal government granted the territory two sections of land in each of its townships for the purpose of generating revenue for public schools. The state trust land system was created.

The state received land after all other potential buyers, such as wealthy private individuals and railroad companies. As a result, the state trust lands were usually poor quality revenue generators.

By the 1920s, developers cut much of Washington's private timberland and rarely reforested it. Much of the clear-cut land was simply abandoned. In an effort to better manage these timberlands and create more revenue for beneficiaries, the state legislature passed a series of statutes to acquire these lands. The state now manages approximately 600,000 acres called forest board transfer land — a type of state trust land in which the beneficiaries are both state and county institutions.

Blanchard Mountain, just south of the Chuckanut Range, is forest board transfer land. Most of the revenue generated by forest board transfer land goes to the governments of the counties in which the given lands are located. In the case of Blanchard Mountain, the money goes to institutions like the Burlington-Edison School District, Skagit County fire departments and the Skagit County General Fund.

### Criticism

The Department of Natural Resources manages Blanchard Mountain and other state trust lands for the maximum profit of the lands' specific beneficiaries. But recently, environmental groups and citizens have criticized the DNR for its management methods.

"We want things planned out and looked at more comprehensively," said Lisa McShane, community outreach director at the Northwest Ecosystem Alliance. "In the past it's been about maximum logging revenue — it's been driven by the logging industry."

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—Ron Rhoades, forester,  
*Department of Natural Resources*



McShane said the NWEA plans to help change the way the DNR manages all state trust lands.

"The state believes it needs to maximize profits through timber revenue," she said. "We believe they need to manage it for multiple uses."

McShane said recreation and conservation are some of the aspects of management that the NWEA wants DNR officials to consider.

"This can only happen through legislative action," McShane said.

The NWEA is currently sponsoring two bills in an effort to promote these changes in state trust land management. The first is designed to add a wider range of views to the Washington State Board of Natural Resources. The WSBNR, directed by the state legislature, decides how state lands are managed.

The bill would add one citizen with hunting and fishing interests and one whose water supply originates on a state trust land, McShane said. Currently, the board is made up entirely of representatives of the beneficiaries.

The other bill, called the Multiple Use Management Bill, would require the WSBNR to more fully consider other factors, such as clean water, wildlife habitat, ecological integrity and recreational value, when making management decisions on state trust lands.

"Our intention is that management of state lands be done with the evaluation of public values along with revenue," McShane said. "Money is still on the list, but it would no longer be the only thing."

On the local level, the NWEA and the Mount Baker Chapter of the Sierra Club have joined together in an effort to possibly change Blanchard Mountain's status from Forest Board Transfer Land to a Natural Resource Conservation Area. If Blanchard receives NRCA status, it would no longer be harvested for timber.

The state has already performed a preliminary study of the Blanchard Mountain area to see if it qualifies for Natural Resource Conservation Area status.

Jeff May, the DNR Baker District Manager, said an area must meet several criteria before it can receive NRCA status.

"The land needs to have state wide significance in terms of environment, habitat or recreational potential," he said.

May said that the preliminary study found important features on Blanchard Mountain, but that it did not currently meet the statewide criteria. He added that the preliminary study's indications are not the final decision.

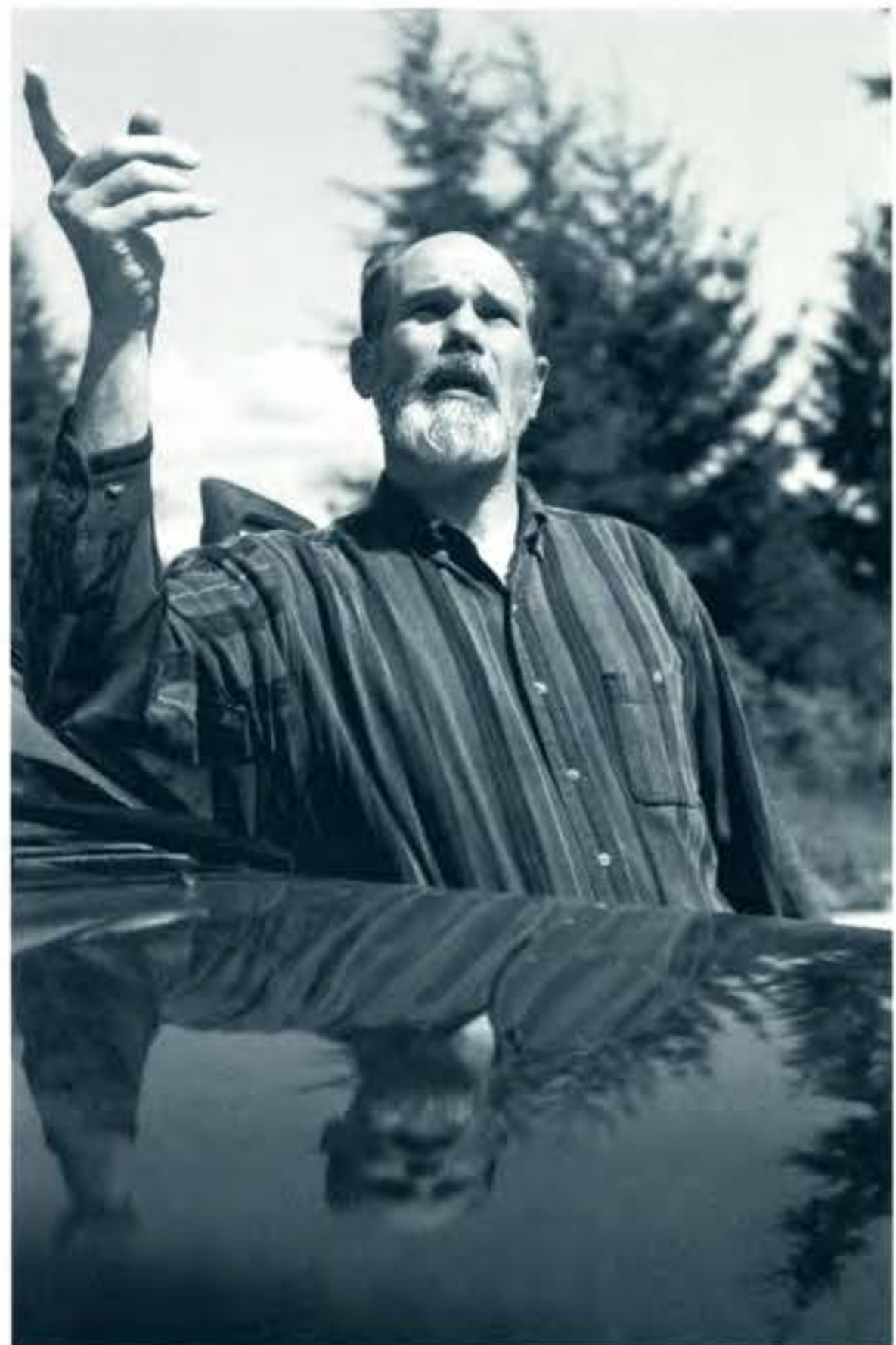
"I think it's still a little bit up in the air," he said.

Mark Morrow, public information officer at the DNR, said it is much easier to get NRCA status if the land is first transferred into common school trust land — another type of state trust land — via the Trust Lands Transfer Program. In the transfer program, areas slated for preservation go on to a statewide list, which is compiled approximately every two years by the legislature. Areas wait on the list until they are high enough on it to receive transfer program funding, which is also allotted by the state legislature.

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—Lisa McShane, Northwest Ecosystem Alliance

Ron Roades, a forester for the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, surveys timber harvest contract areas on state trust lands for anything that could impede the pending harvest.







As a forester for the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, part of Ron Roades' (above) responsibilities is to designate leave trees in an area slated to be clear-cut. Current policy requires the DNR to leave eight trees per acre.

"AT SOME POINT IT BECOMES THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT MANAGED LANDS. THERE ISN'T ENOUGH MONEY TO KEEP PAYING OURSELVES FOR OUR OWN LAND."

—Mitch Friedman, executive director,  
*Northwest Ecosystem Alliance*

"They're in there competing for those dollars," Morrow said. "So far Blanchard has not been able to get high enough on the list to get that money."

Morrow said when funding for a transfer program land becomes available, the land can then be potentially designated as an NRCA. The state then purchases state trust land elsewhere in the county and continues to manage it for newly appointed beneficiaries that are closer to the land being harvested.

Morrow also said that if Blanchard Mountain becomes eligible for the Trust Lands Transfer Program and receives NRCA status, the Burlington-Edison School District would lose the funds generated by the timber sales there. With the transfer program, the school district closest to the newly purchased common school trust land would then receive the funding.

McShane said in addition to NRCA status and the Trust Land Transfer Program, other options remain available for Blanchard Mountain's preservation. One option is reconveyance, where the Skagit County Commissioners would request that the land be given back to the county for park use and the DNR would manage the land as a park. Another option is the landscape plan. Implemented by the DNR, the landscape plan would still allow logging, along with other public uses.

"At this point we're not pushing for one option or the other," McShane said. "We are not going into it with a preconceived idea of what should happen."

Whatever options for preservation of Blanchard Mountain have to originate through the legislature, which along with the WSBNR, tells the DNR how to manage all state trust lands.

"That's why we're working with the legislation," McShane said. "We do definitely also want to work very closely with the DNR on this — it's a very long process."

## Past Preservation

In 1999, the NWEA finished a campaign to preserve the Loomis Wildlands — 25,000 acres of roadless forest in northeastern Washington state. Mitch Friedman, founder and executive director of the NWEA, helped to orchestrate a fund-raising drive involving more than 70 organizations and businesses. The drive raised \$16.5 million from various contributors to purchase the land from the state.

"Thirty-five hundred people donated a king's ransom out of their own pockets," Friedman said. "It was an extremely generous act."

The state took approximately \$3 million of the total \$16.5 to purchase trust lands elsewhere in the state, similar to what it would do in the Trust Land Transfer Program process.

But Friedman said the situation with Blanchard Mountain is different. The DNR had slated prime sections of Loomis for harvest, and time to act was limited.

"Loomis was under immediate threat," he said. "Also, there was no political support [for preservation] being in the middle of logging country."

Friedman said this time the NWEA is taking a different approach for several reasons.



"At some point it becomes the government's responsibility to protect managed lands," he said. "There isn't enough money to keep paying ourselves for our own land."

Another reason a land purchase is not a viable option for Blanchard Mountain is due to the potential land value. Blanchard is lower-level, west side timber, meaning that the trees grow more densely and thicker in diameter, creating higher quality timber harvest land, Friedman said.

### **Constitutionality**

In 2000, the NWEA approached Daniel Jack Chasan, a lawyer and writer living on Vashon Island, to propose that he research state trust lands. Chasan is also the Chairman of the Board of the Vashon School District.

"We chose Chasan because we wanted someone whose opinion was unassailable," McShane said.

The results of what Chasan found ran in the Summer 2000 edition of the Seattle University Law Review.

"The state constitution states that the granted lands are held in trust for all the people," Chasan said. "But the courts haven't really interpreted it that way."

He referred to the court case of *Skamania v. State*. The case was a response to the Forest Products Industry Recovery Act of 1982. The act came at a time when the price of board feet had plummeted due to a recession in the housing market. Many timber companies could not honor their state contracts without losing money. The act allowed the companies to bail out of their contracts with little or no penalty, Chasan said.

The ruling in the case, however, overturned the Forest Products Industry Recovery Act on the grounds that it benefited the logging industry and the state's economy at the expense of the beneficiaries, and that "This divided loyalty constitutes a breach of trust."

The ruling essentially found that the lands had to be managed for the maximum profit of the beneficiaries, Chasan said. But Article XVI of the state constitution holds that "All of the public lands granted to the state are held in trust for all the people."

The problem with the current management, critics argue, is that the specific beneficiaries of the state trust lands do not constitute "all the people," of Washington state.

### **Finite Resources**

In the year 2001, Washington's population is nearing six million. State and county institution needs are increasing parallel with the growth of the population.

"We've been telling them that we can't do the volume they've been asking for forever," Rhoades said.

He said he usually doesn't mind the newer regulations, and they sometimes give him an opportunity to preserve land that needs it.

"I don't mind set-asides or leaving trees if it's going to help things in the future," he said.

While working on sales in the past, Rhoades found characteristics on land that warranted preservation. On one sale, he found about eight acres of old growth, which he was able to put wider tree buffers around. On another sale, they found a section of salmon-spawning stream that wasn't on the department of fisheries maps.

"We were able to get about a 1,000 feet of stream chocked full of salmon onto their maps — that type of work is kind of fun," he said.

Rhoades said that although he doesn't usually mind the increasing regulations, he feels pressure from both sides — one asking for revenue and one asking for preservation.

"Sometimes our policies contradict ability to produce volume — that gets frustrating," he said. "That's probably the most tough thing; the trust beneficiaries are saying 'we want more volume' and we can't cut here or there because of certain restrictions."

"I guess that's the difference between someone in the field and someone in the office," Rhoades said. "We're trying to get the volume and they're just expecting it."

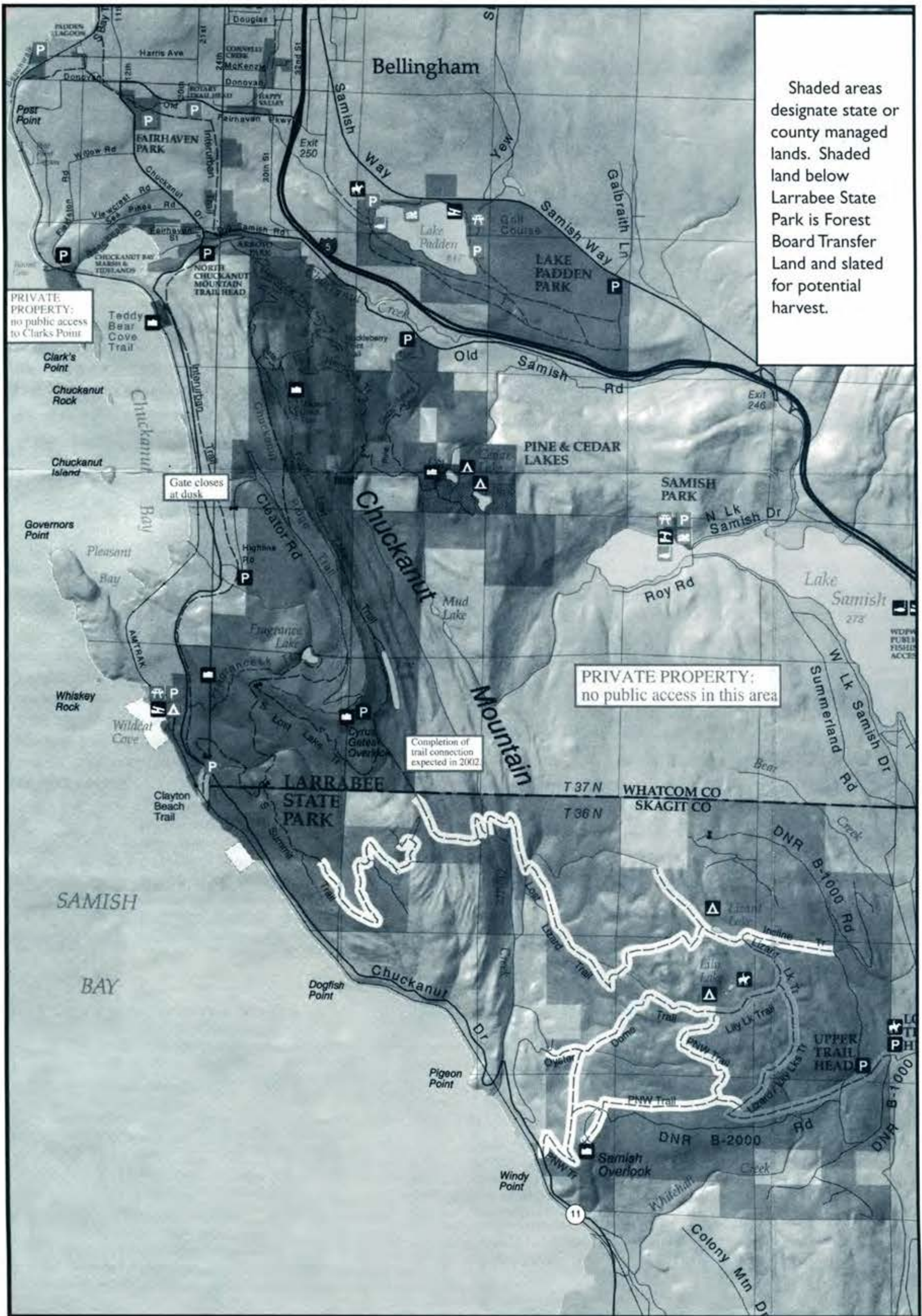
The question is whether or not the state of Washington can expect a finite amount of land to continue to support an ever-growing population's needs.

THE PROBLEM WITH THE CURRENT MANAGEMENT, CRITICS ARGUE, IS THAT THE SPECIFIC BENEFICIARIES OF THE STATE TRUST LANDS DO NOT CONSTITUTE "ALL THE PEOPLE" OF WASHINGTON STATE.

Lisa McShane (below), community outreach director at the Northwest Ecosystem Alliance, advocates preservation of Blanchard Mountain and a reassessment of the way state trust lands are managed in general.







map reprinted courtesy of the Washington State Department of Natural Resources



# THE HARVESTERS

By Greg Woehler

Photos by Chris Goodenow

In a 15-acre clearcut, amidst a wall of diesel engine noise and the crackle of chainsaw motors stands David Burlingame, calmly eating an orange. He's wearing ear plugs, safety goggles and a Day-Glo orange hard hat.

Directly behind him looms a 90-foot-high tower, held by cables that splay out hundreds of feet into the forest and attach to tree stumps. On one of the cables rides a diesel-powered carriage, from which two bundles of newly cut trees are suspended. The bundles, swinging back and forth as they ride up the cable to the tower, are headed straight for Burlingame.

Behind him creeps the shovel loader, an immense excavator on tank treads. In front of the loader hangs its huge arm and the grappling claw it uses to pick up logs. It too is coming straight at Burlingame.

The carriage, controlled via radio by the tower engineer and the chokers at the bottom of the hill, comes to a stop right in front of Burlingame and lowers its cargo onto a pile of logs it has already deposited.

Burlingame hustles to the logs, releases the cables and sends the carriage gliding back to the bottom of the hill for another load.

He grabs his chain saw and sets to work trimming the branches off the logs and cutting them into proper lengths. As Burlingame works, the lumbering shovel



"THERE [ARE] A LOT OF SMALL [LOGGING] OUTFITS THAT JUST COULDN'T OR WOULDN'T CHANGE WITH THE TIMES."

— Dick Hammer, A.L.R.T. Corporation

David Burlingame (above, and left), a chaser for A.L.R.T. Corporation, calmly and quickly unloads logs from the diesel powered carriage bringing logs up the slope.



"I WOULDN'T BE OUT HERE IF I DIDN'T LOVE IT. I LIKE THE WILDLIFE YOU SEE OUT HERE. I SAW A HERD OF ELK AT THE BOTTOM OF THE MOUNTAIN THE OTHER DAY."

—Frank Cain, Jr., logger

(Top) A.L.R.T. logging manager Ernie Parker walks on a recently cut tree at a logging site above Acme. After buzzing through a tree in about a minute, Frank Cain, Jr. (below, bottom), watches it fall, knocking other trees down in its path.



loader moves into position, ready to begin stacking the logs. The arm swings to the pile and the claw greedily begins snatching the logs, just a few feet away from him. Burlingame continues with his cutting, not even looking up.

This is the life of the chaser on a logging crew. This is the job David Burlingame does seven hours a day, five days a week for A.L.R.T. Corporation, a contract logging company based in Everson, Wash. It's the job he plans to do until he retires. It's a job his father did his whole life.

It's a job Burlingame loves.

"It's refreshing to get out here in the fresh air away from all the stress of city life," he shouts over the din. "Beats sitting behind a desk somewhere."

The crew is logging a 133-acre parcel of land in the hills above Acme, west of Lake Whatcom. The land has an estimated 4.8 million board feet of timber on it, said Ernie Parker, A.L.R.T. logging manager. A board foot measures 1-foot by 1-foot by 1-inch. Parker says a local saw mill purchased the timber from the Department of Natural Resources for \$1,087,000.

The DNR estimates there are 120 million board feet of timber on Blanchard Mountain's 4,500 acres that could be harvested.

Burlingame has yet to be hurt on the job, which puts him in the minority among loggers, said Snohomish County logger Collin Palmer. He said loggers swap injury stories like boys trade baseball cards.

"It seems like everybody's been hurt out there at least once," Palmer said. "I was working as a choker about 10 years ago and I got hit square in the chest and the face by a cedar about as big around as a manhole cover. Damn thing broke four ribs and broke my nose. Lucky it wasn't moving too fast or I probably wouldn't be here to talk about it."

Burlingame credits his safety record to simply staying alert, though he admits that random accidents sometimes happen out in the field. He said he saw a man die once when a branch whipped around and hit him.

"He did everything right, and his partner did, too," he said. "It was just a freak accident. But freak accidents happen no matter what you're doing. This is no more dangerous than delivering newspapers."

Working about 100 yards away, Frank Cain, Jr. is cutting his way through a stand of cedar and fir trees. Cain has been logging since 1982 and, like Burlingame, he said he loves it.

"I wouldn't be out here if I didn't love it," he said. "I like the wildlife you see out here. I saw a herd of elk at the bottom of the mountain the other day."

Unlike Burlingame, Cain has been hurt seriously while logging.

"I broke my collar bone and four or five ribs," he said. A log rolled on top of Cain and pinned him down. Like everyone else on the site, he wears a whistle that he's supposed to blow if he's hurt and can't move.



In this situation, however, Cain's arms were pinned to his chest and he couldn't reach the whistle. It's doubtful anyone would've heard it over the bellowing of all the machinery, anyway.

"I guess I blacked out, but I wormed my way out from under the log somehow," he said.

Parker, a former safety inspector for the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, once broke his leg and had to be helped out of the woods by Cain.

Cain has twice won the Ironman contest, a grueling competition where loggers race each other through four back-to-back skill competitions.

He has a banded tattoo around his left bicep showing different logging scenes, and on his right bicep is a logging emblem he copied from his tape measure.

"I couldn't sit behind a cubicle all day," he said, echoing Burlingame. "I wouldn't be able to hold a civilian job, where you go to work and have to put on a smile for everybody.

"I'm too ornery," he said, grinning.

Cain was all set to study architecture before he started cutting trees. He said he began logging to save money before college and simply never went back to school.

He said the money was pretty good when he started. Now, it's just decent.

"I haven't really had a raise in 13 years," he said. "The money's just not there. Thirteen years ago I made a good living; I'm still making a good living, but not as good."

Even so, Cain and Parker said they know many unemployed, experienced loggers eager for work.

"If you called up and asked for a rigging job today, I don't think you'd get it," Cain said.

"There's a lot of people out there who are just down," Parker said. "There's a lot of unemployment out here."

Washington state was hit hard by the decrease in timber production in the 1990s. According to the Forest Service, timber sales fell 78 percent from their high in the mid-1980s. For many in timber-dependent areas, it meant the end of an entire way of life.

Some areas of Washington state, such as Grays Harbor and Pacific counties, saw unemployment spike as high as 15 percent in the 1990s, according to the DLI.

"There's a lot of small [logging] outfits that just couldn't or wouldn't change with the times," Dick Hammer of A.L.R.T. said.

Hammer has been logging for more than 50 years and now handles purchasing and permits for the company. He said many companies didn't adapt to new environmental regulations, such as the buffer zones around waterways that are meant to protect salmon spawning grounds. Trees help maintain the cool water temperatures salmon need and the root systems limit the amount of silt and debris that washes into the water.

John Nelson had to quit logging after almost 20 years in the business. He was born in Grisdale, Wash., about 50 miles northwest of Olympia.

"It was the last permanent logging camp in the country; my grandfather was the governor of the camp," he said with pride. "My mom was literally raised there."

Nelson said he got his start in the timber industry when he was 13, planting seedlings in clear-cut hills surrounding Grisdale. His family has logged on the Olympic Peninsula since the beginning of the century and he said there was no reason to think he wouldn't do the same.

Nelson rode out most of the turbulent '90s working for Weyerhaeuser, but in 1998, he decided to leave.

"You just never knew for sure if the job was gonna be there," he

recalled. "I've got two kids — 12 and 16 — and when it's time for college for them, I need to know that I'm gonna have a job.

"I played my cards right and I got out at a good time," he said. "A lot of guys with smaller companies didn't. Those poor bastards, they lost everything."

Nelson landed on his feet. He found a better-paying job working for Rohm and Haas, a chemical manufacturer, at their Elma facility. Still, he said it's no comparison to the satisfaction he got from logging.

"I just loved it," he said. "I've seen more beauty in a day than most people see in a lifetime. I've seen things I can't even describe."

Nelson bristles when critics say loggers simply destroy beauty when they clear-cut a patch of the forest.

"We weren't destroying the environment, we were farming!" he said. "When people look out over a field of corn that's been harvested, do they complain that it's been destroyed? No, because they know it'll grow back."

"There's too much emphasis put on the visual aspects of the forest," said logging contractor Paul Isaacson, who owns more than 2,000 acres of timberland in Whatcom

"IF WE DON'T SELECTIVELY LOG IN PLACES LIKE BLANCHARD, [LOGGING COMPANIES] ARE GOING TO GO PLACES LIKE SOUTH AMERICA, WHERE IT'S CHEAPER. I DON'T SEE THESE POOR, IMPOVERISHED PEOPLE IN THESE COUNTRIES WITH A LOT OF 3,000 SQUARE-FOOT HOUSES. THE WOOD ISN'T BEING USED BY THEM. IT'S BEING USED BY US."

—Paul Isaacson, logging contractor



County. "You might have open-heart surgery, but I sure don't want to see it. It's the same thing with clearcuts."

For Isaacson, the answer to this dilemma is simple: "If you don't like clearcuts, don't go stand in a clearcut!"

He said he believes a clear-cut area has benefits, even aesthetically: "On a nice day, do you see people in the forest on Blanchard? No, you see them standing in the clearcuts. A clearcut's a cool place to be."

Isaacson said environmental groups and the media vilify loggers and unfairly paint them as the enemies.

"We're told every day that we're rapers and pillagers," he said. "We've had windows knocked out of equipment and had it spray painted with 'tree killer.' I could retire tomorrow if I wanted to. But I enjoy what I do and I feel it's honorable what I do."

"My son came home from school one day and he said, 'Dad, you're a tree killer.' That's what he'd learned in school that day," Cain said. "One time there were some people out in the woods calling me a rapist, saying I was gonna be judged when I go to heaven."

"You have to get pretty thick-skinned after awhile."

A.L.R.T. personnel have to lock a cable across the road when they're driving into and out of the area because vandals recently snuck in at night and damaged equipment.

Hammer said vandals have burned A.L.R.T. equipment, broken windows and poured sand into gas tanks and intake manifolds, among other things.

Rather than heaping blame on loggers, Isaacson said he sees American consumers as the real culprits.

"Until consumption is addressed, we're not going to solve this problem," he said.

"Wood consumption is way up in this country," Stargell said. "We can keep growing trees here forever. This is fertile land. Or we can grow elsewhere, in other countries, with no regulations and limits."

"If we don't selectively log in places like Blanchard, [logging companies] are going to go places like South America, where it's cheaper," Isaacson says. "I don't see the poor, impoverished people in these countries with a lot of 3,000 square-foot houses. The wood isn't being used by them. It's being used by us."

Hammer said popular opinion about loggers has dramatically shifted since he began logging in the 1940s.

"When I grew up, every young man who thought he could hack it wanted to be a logger," he said. "Everybody respected it because they knew that everything around here was either supported by logging or fishing."

"You need to remember that these are men doing a job," he said. "Most of our logging crews are family people. They're supporting their kids and their homes and their schools. People need to realize that these are really good people out here."



Frank Cain, Jr. (above, top) has been logging since 1982 and, despite earning the same wages for 13 years, said he loves it.

A.L.R.T. (above, bottom) is currently logging a forest area above Acme, Wash. that is estimated to supply 4.8 million board feet from its 133 acres. The Department of Natural Resources estimates that Blanchard Mountain could supply 120 million board feet from its 4,500 acres.



# A Cedar Living



By Chris Goodenow

For Greg Bormuth, the Blanchard Mountain area is not the same as it once was. As the population of the surrounding area grows, Bormuth said, so does the controversy around one of the communities' mainstays — logging.

Amidst a changing community, Greg and Sara Bormuth's small sawmill, called Barrel Springs Mill, remains unchanged. Located just off Interstate 5, at the base of Blanchard Mountain, Bormuth's mill has operated for 22 years. The Bormuths run the mill the same way they have for the last two decades — by themselves. Bormuth said he doesn't compete with the larger fir mills because they only process large amounts of fir trees.

He said his mill currently produces about 4,000 board feet of lumber per week, enough to fill a 32-foot truck.

On the emergence of the recent logging controversy, Bormuth feels that piecemeal, or selective logging, if done responsibly, offers the best results for the community.

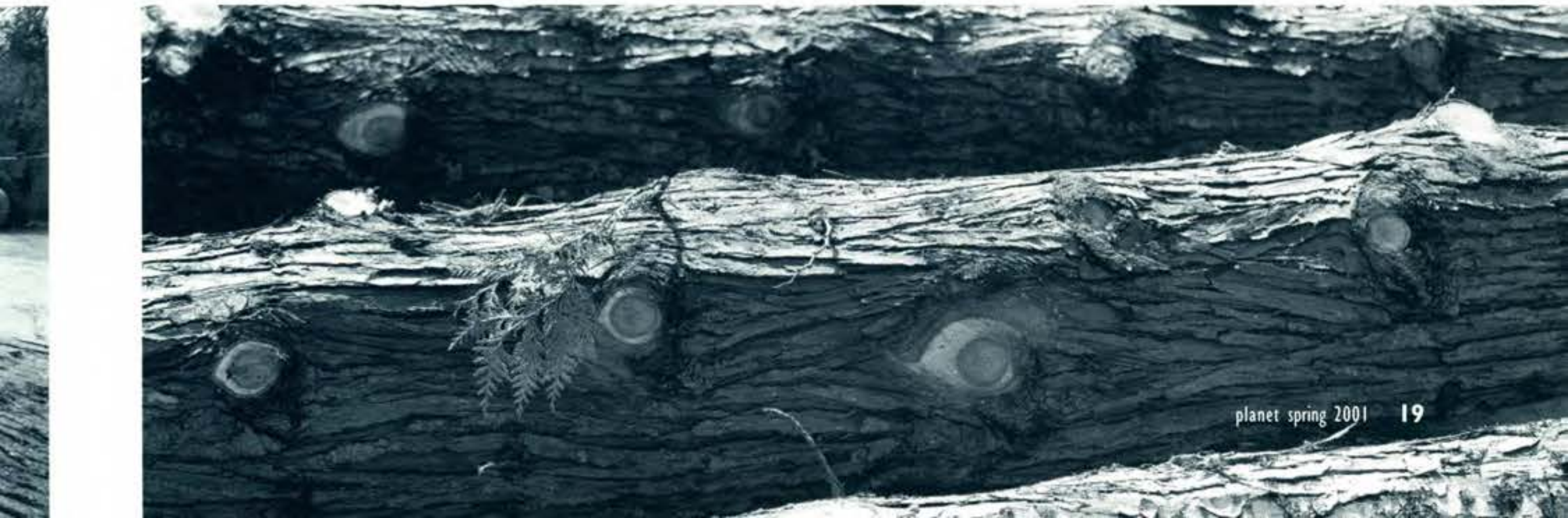
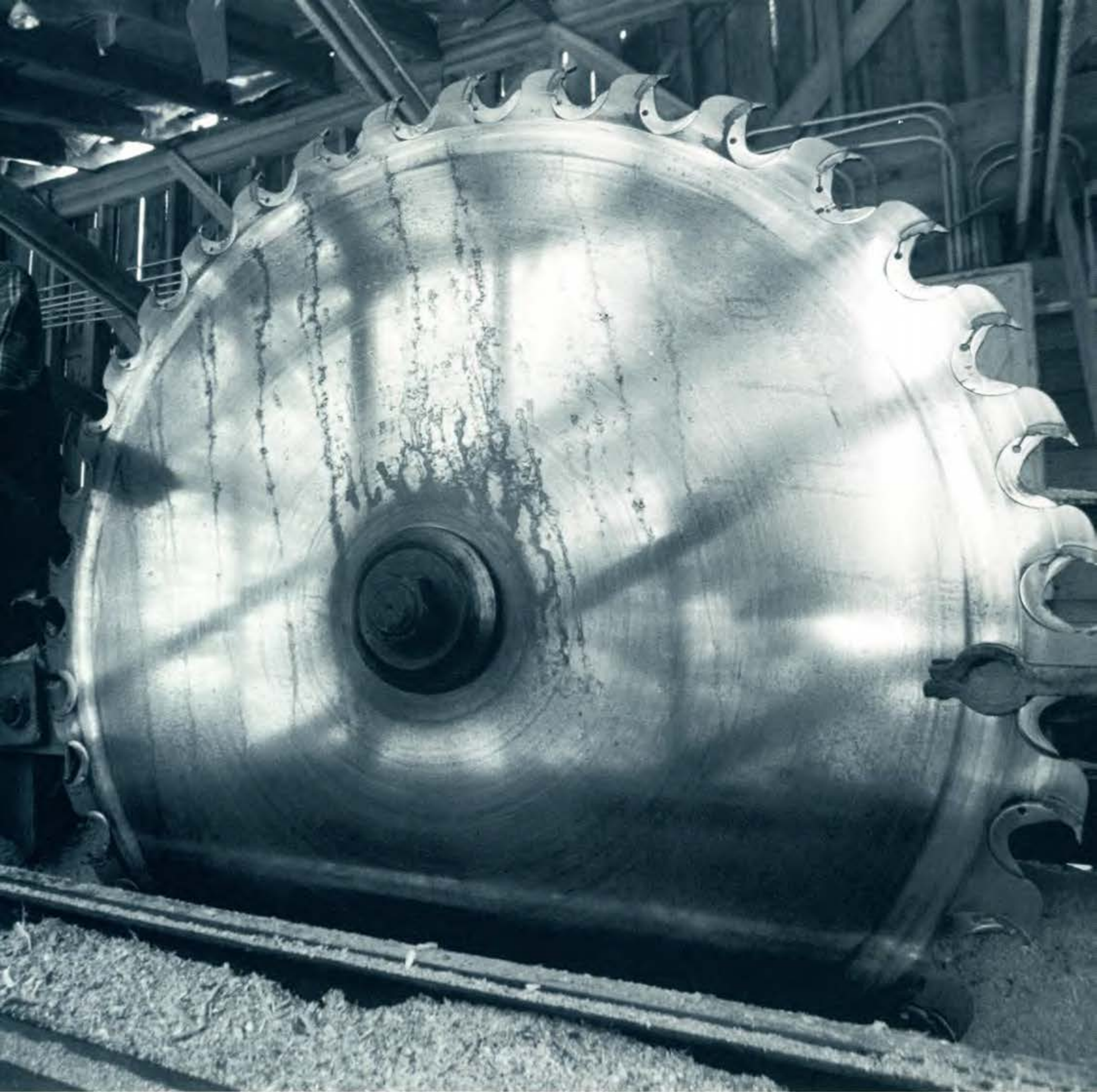
"I think that trees are a crop," said Bormuth. "It's time to start taking it off, as long as we put it back."

He said he thinks the mountain can still accommodate recreation when it's managed responsibly. Bormuth said he considers himself an advocate of sustainable management on the mountain.

"So that my kids have something when it's their turn," he said.







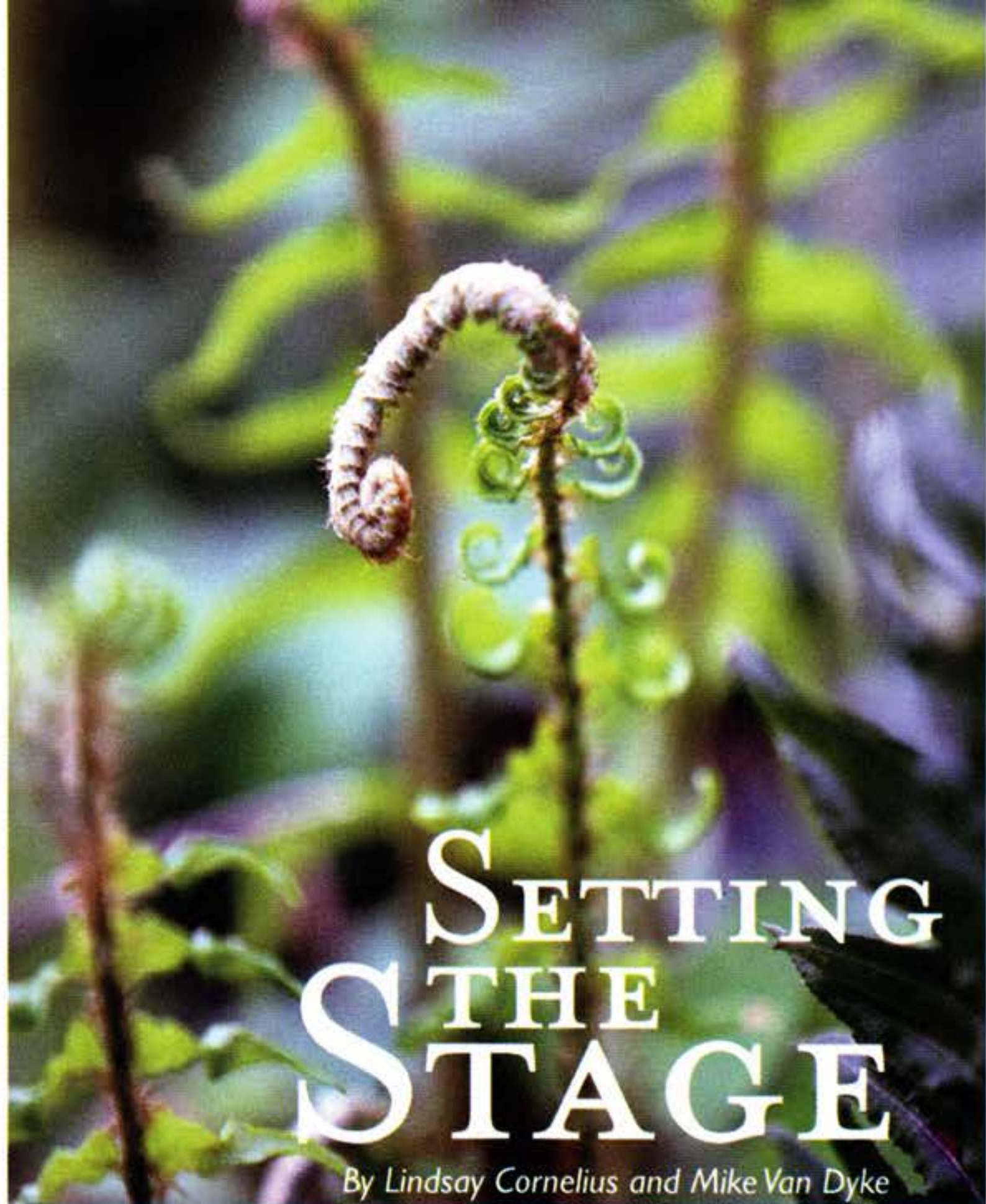


“Taxol, from the Pacific Yew, is a source of a powerful drug to fight cancer. Historically, the Yew was a trash species and was burned after logging because it had no value.”

— Dave Wallin, professor,  
Western Washington University

*Photos by Chris Goodenow*

In the springtime fiddlehead (right) emerge on Blanchard Mountain. In mid-spring their leaves unfurl revealing common swordferns. A millipede (below, top) can be recognized by its distinctive yellow orange spots and resides in decaying logs or stumps. Equisetum arvense (below, bottom), the common horsetail, are the ancestors of plants that resemble giant trees. Horsetails are common in wet marsh areas.



# SETTING THE STAGE

By Lindsay Cornelius and Mike Van Dyke  
Photos by Chris Goodenow

This place is alive.

Under a dense canopy of needle-shaped leaves, the air is cool and moist. In the throes of a light breeze, minute pieces of the forest canopy fall, drifting to the forest floor. Critters scurry about in the soil, disappearing under half-eaten logs — the work of a beetle or millipede. So many sounds reverberate through the trees it is hard to distinguish one from the other: leaves in the wind, branches breaking under pressure, a bird singing, another squawking, water dripping and running through a maze that is the forest.

This place is alive.

On Blanchard Mountain, the southernmost mountain in the Chuckanut Range, lives a 75-year old forest that, like many forests in the Pacific Northwest, is riddled with complex relationships between plants, animals and the nutrients that sustain them. The Department of Natural Resources has determined the forest on Blanchard Mountain is ready to be logged. Some Bellingham residents and local organizations, however, advocate the preservation of Blanchard Mountain. They want Blanchard to become a type of forest that has virtually disappeared in the Pacific Northwest. They want it to become old growth.

“Across Western Washington, there’s no shortage of recently disturbed forest land,” said David Wallin, associate professor of environmental science at Western Washington University. “What we don’t have are older seral stages [old growth]. We need to think about how much and where we want our old growth to be, both from an ecological standpoint and how it relates to human beings.”



“The biology on Blanchard is most unique because it’s the only area within western Washington where there is more or less an unbroken expansion [corridor] of forest between the Cascades and the ocean,” Wallin said.

He added that Blanchard Mountain also has a number of unique plant communities, which sets it apart from other forests.

Now 75-years since the last planting, the forest on Blanchard Mountain is like a teenager; it hasn’t yet entered its full stage of maturity, but it’s well on its way. Every forest goes through a series of stages in a process known as succession. On Blanchard Mountain, for example, a recent timber harvest site shows the early signs of succession — remnant stumps, a few standing trees and a shrub layer.

“The shrub layer: wildflowers, herbs, Vine Maple, ferns, Alder and Salal, everything they used to go out and spray so Doug firs can grow, would ordinarily be there for 30 to 50 years,” said Tim Schowalter, an entomologist at Oregon State University.

The Washington State Forest Practice Rules mandate logging companies to replant with “commercially valuable species,” primarily Douglas fir, and to “control competing species to the extent necessary” for the planted



Peter Homann (above), professor of environmental science at Western Washington University explains the nutrient cycles of the forest on Blanchard Mountain.

An uncommon purple trillium flower (below) rests in the shade of a forest canopy on an eastern slope of Blanchard Mountain.







Lily and Lizard Lakes (above) host aquatic plants that can't survive elsewhere in the forest. Courtesy of George Mustoe.

species to grow. The replanting must happen within one to three years of the cut, discouraging natural succession by replacing the shrub layer with Douglas fir. The growth and death of vegetation that occurs naturally after logging would return nutrients to the soil and prime the land for the next successional stage, a young forest.

"There's nothing ecologically sound about our mandate to circumvent early successional stages, but we can't afford to wait because of our need for lumber," Schowalter said.

"Intensive timber management usually means there is a 50-year rotation," Wallin said.

Blanchard Mountain has had a 75-year nap since it was last logged, and is considered overdue by industry standards.

"The tendency of logging operations, on intensively managed lands, is, when they plant, to do so with a limited number of species," Wallin said. "They replant with tree species that are more desirable for wood production: straighter, taller and faster growing." He said this practice reduces plant diversity and genetic diversity.

"As you limit genetic diversity, you're essentially creating a system more vulnerable to disturbance by pathogens and insects, for example," Wallin said.

When the trees all share similar traits, determined by their similar genes, collectively they have reduced ability to survive attacks by insects or disease. This is one way forests differ from tree farms.

Schowalter took part in a national study estimating the percentage of original old growth in the Pacific Northwest before extensive logging took place compared to today's percentage.

"We estimated two-thirds to three-fourths of the landscape was originally old growth. Now three-fourths of the landscape is covered with forests approximately 50-years old," he said.

Not coincidentally, forests that are intensively managed for timber production usually only reach the age of 50.

**"Historically, there's a sense we view forests as a place to grow trees, like corn in a cornfield, and we could manage sites to increase the production of wood fiber," Wallin said. "Certainly that's true.**

**"We all use paper and live in wood houses, so we have to acknowledge the fact that we need wood products and resources. But, we've begun to acknowledge there's more value in the forests than just 2-by-4s and plywood."**

Wallin cited recreation, clean air and water, and untapped resources as just a few of the values currently attributed to undisturbed forest ecosystems.

"Taxol, from the Pacific Yew, is a source of a powerful drug to fight cancer," Wallin said. "Historically, the Yew was a trash species and was burned after logging because it had no value."



Peter Homann, a professor of environmental science at Western, said the benefit of having a diverse community of plants is that the ecosystem is better able to respond to disturbance.

According to a recent survey, Blanchard Mountain is home to hundreds of species of plants and animals.

"Hemlock is a good indicator of forest succession to old growth, but [they'll] be 100-years old before old growth is fully established," Showalter said. "A Hemlock may be 15, 20, 30 years old and just six-inches tall, and if the tree over it dies, opening a gap of light in the canopy, it just takes off."

The opportunity for a Hemlock to grow is created by the death of another tree, but that isn't the only benefit the dead tree provides.

**"A dead tree is probably harboring more living things than it did when it was living," Showalter said. "Beetles and other wood-borers give the decomposers a jumpstart on decomposition early after tree death."**

Insects, spiders and other small organisms do much of the work in a forest, moving matter from the canopy to the forest floor, where he said fungi and bacteria return nutrients to the soil.

"Trees need about a dozen different types of nutrients [to grow]," Homann said. "For example, calcium is found in rocks; when they dissolve, calcium becomes available [to plants]."

The roots of plants absorb calcium and other nutrients from the soil. Herbivores feeding on plant foliage benefit from the nutrients assimilated in the plant tissues. Healthy vegetation means a healthy diet for the forest herbivores like banana slugs, inchworms, squirrels and deer, all found on Blanchard Mountain. Large carnivores, such as cougar and bear that would be at the top of the Blanchard Mountain food chain, suffer from loss of habitat.

"There is minimal support for large carnivores because the surrounding areas have been logged so frequently and are highly fragmented," Wallin said.

Larger animals usually need larger areas in which to live, find food and reproduce. Two smaller, airborne forest carnivores, the spotted owl and the marbled murrelet, nest in old-growth trees.

"At present, neither of those species is [on Blanchard Mountain] because the forest just isn't able to support them," Wallin said. "Marbled murrelets in particular need older seral stages close to the sea, so Blanchard [Mountain] would be ideal for that particular species, in the future."

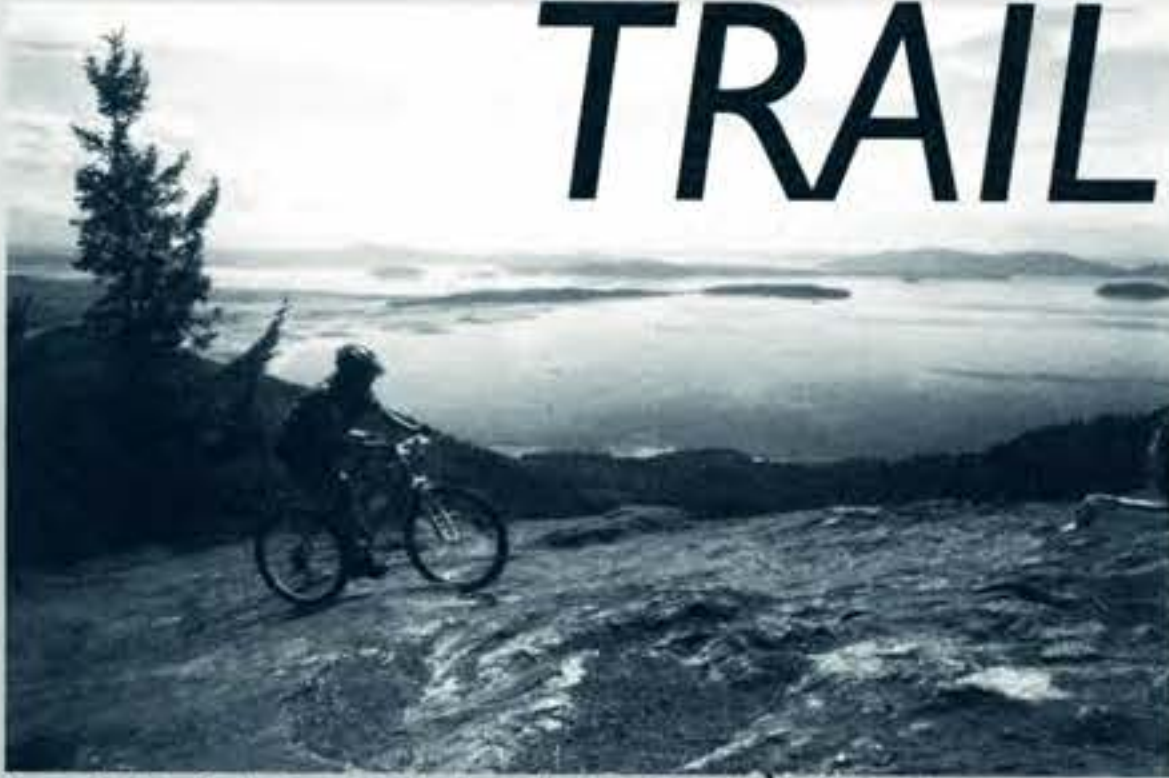
Although both of these species are worthy of protection, their absence from Blanchard Mountain makes logging a legal option, but intensive management for timber protection could keep the two rare birds and many other creatures off the mountain for some time.

As the last green space remaining between the Cascades and the sea, Blanchard Mountain provides us an excellent opportunity to do something different — to see the forest for what it is and for what it could be.

An old stump (below) nurses new life in the forests of Blanchard Mountain.







Mountain biker Cathy Crouch climbs the rocky terrain of Blanchard Mountain in the foreground of a vantage point looking west towards the Samish Flats and the San Juan Islands. Photo illustration courtesy of George Mustoe.

# TRAIL BLOCK

By Veronica Bruffy

The meeting room was full of a variety of recreational go-getters. More than 30 hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians, hang gliders, llama packers, foresters, land managers, biologists, environmentalists and representatives from Bellingham, Whatcom and Skagit County Parks and Recreation Departments gathered to discuss the future of area trails. The groups set a goal to improve the Chuckanut Mountain trails system, located on the dividing line of Skagit and Whatcom Counties, with a compromise that would allow multi-use activities in the development plans.

One proposed improvement to the trail system on Blanchard Mountain was a plan for the Lost-Lizard Lake Trail, which would unite Lost Lake in Whatcom County's Larrabee State Park and Lizard Lake, located on Blanchard Mountain in Skagit County. This trail would be the first and likely only connection of Larrabee State Park to the Southern Chuckanut Mountains.

"I'm eager to get into the Lost-Lizard Trail," said Ken Wilcox, project manager for the Chuckanut Mountain Trails Master Plan and author of *Hiking Whatcom County*. "It would be a lot of fun to have the opportunity to hike a huge loop from Larrabee to Blanchard."

The proposed six-mile link would allow all kinds of non-motorized traffic. It would pass through several types of terrain — from recently logged sections to mature forest — and would pass over Oyster Creek.

According to the Chuckanut Mountain Trails Master Plan, completed in June of 1996 by a steering committee comprised of concerned citizens and interested users, the Lost-Lizard Trail is a high priority trail because it connects the Northern and Southern Chuckanuts.

The trail will provide access to backcountry camping and terrain for anything from walking and hiking to mountain biking or horse riding. Users could enjoy the breathtaking views of the San Juan Islands to the west, the Samish Bay Flats to the south, Mount Baker to the east and the Chuckanut Mountains to the north.

The trails would avoid linking the nearby logging roads to retain the remote character of the area between Lost and Lizard Lakes.

The Whatcom Independent Mountain Pedalers, a nonprofit recreational mountain biking interest group, want to build the trail themselves.

Mark Petersen, president of the organization, said volunteers have already begun marking the proposed Lost-Lizard Trail route. Petersen and three other WHIMPs have spent 80 hours surveying the trail.

"The parks department wants the trail to be able to survive with a minimal amount of maintenance," Petersen said. "They don't have a lot of manpower so they want a trail that can be sustainable."

Petersen feels volunteer work should be able to keep the trail up to par.

"If everyone does a little every time they ride or hike, the trails will stay well maintained," Petersen said.

WHIMPs volunteer members have put in more than 1,000 hours of trail building and maintenance in Whatcom County since October 2000.

"WHIMPs is the most active trail maintenance organization in Whatcom County," Petersen said. "We have 15 years of trail building experience under our belts."



"But the Backcountry Horsemen [of America] do the most work up on Blanchard Mountain," Petersen added.

WHIMPs began building trails in 1993, when it hosted the Padden MTN Pedal. At that time, a section of the three-mile Lake Padden loop called the "drop of death" was constructed inefficiently with a 45-percent grade in some sections, thus inviting erosion and rapid trail deterioration.

WHIMPs notified the Bellingham City Parks Department and volunteered to perform the necessary work to raise the quality of not only the "drop of death," but the whole Lake Padden Loop to handle multiuse activity.

WHIMPs has helped complete the Lost Lake Trail, the Pacific Northwest Trail and Galbraith Mountain trails, among others.

Petersen said he and other WHIMPs want to bypass a contractor and do the work themselves. They hope to get the Lost-Lizard Trail built in a manner that would benefit all recreational users.

WHIMPs hopes to begin construction of the Lost-Lizard Trail this year.

"The Lost-Lizard connector was proposed back in 1996 in the Chuckanut Trails

Master Plan, but no one ever took the responsibility to begin construction," Petersen said.

"The idea of the multi-use trails was definitely controversial," Wilcox said. "The horses don't like the bikes, and the hikers don't like the bikes, and the

bikers just want to go everywhere!"

The committee's goal was to develop a plan for a comprehensive trail system in the Chuckanut Mountains. At that time roughly 60 miles of trail existed in the area, and the committee wanted to take advantage of the many available recreation opportunities.

Joan Casey, hiker and member of the steering committee, said the proposed system would be constructed when time, money and commitment were available.

The plan laid the groundwork for a number of trails, which would connect, combine or reinforce the existing trails in the Chuckanuts.

The steering committee spent seven months preparing the final plan for public presentation. Casey said a grant from the Non-Highway Off-Road Vehicle Activities program provided funding for the plan. The funding didn't

"THE PARKS DEPARTMENT WANTS THE TRAIL TO BE ABLE TO SURVIVE WITH A MINIMAL AMOUNT OF MAINTENANCE. THEY DON'T HAVE A LOT OF MANPOWER SO THEY WANT A TRAIL THAT CAN BE SUSTAINABLE."

— Mark Peterson, president, WHIMPs

include the construction of the trails, which can be quite costly.

"We are talking several hundred thousand dollars here," Wilcox said.

Although WHIMPs have had trail building success in the past, Wilcox said he wants to proceed with caution when constructing the Lost-Lizard Trail.

"When volunteers come in and say, 'Hey, we can build a trail,' you have to think in two ways: One, it will be cheaper to use volunteers, and the trail will most likely be up and running sooner, but you also have to realize that these volunteers are not experts in trail building," Wilcox said. "It's tough for volunteers to build a trail in a wet and steep environment — Blanchard has both these traits."

Wilcox said he believes hiring a contractor to construct the Lost-Lizard Trail is critical. He reasons that a contractor would have the necessary skills, material and equipment to construct a trail, where the proposed route meanders through difficult terrain such as steep slopes, marshy wetlands, wildlife habitats and lower-canopy plants.

The trail must be built properly the first time, so everyone can continue to enjoy its varied terrain.

"Blanchard is a place anyone can go, a place only 15 minutes away for most of us, a place to release your soul and absorb Washington," said Brian Beatty, coordinator for the Associated Students Outdoor Center at Western.



During the last 13 years, Mike McGlenn has come to believe the wilderness always looks better from six feet off the ground. As a member of the Backcountry Horsemen of America since 1988, he has roamed many Northwest trails on horseback. And, although McGlenn is always ready to ride anywhere, Blanchard Mountain is his recreational home.

For McGlenn, Blanchard Mountain offers one of the only trails that allows horses and is open year-round in northwest Washington, aside from the Baker Lake Trail, which is more than 85 miles away from Bellingham, Wash.

McGlenn and his wife Chris, residents of Bellingham, visit the mountain with their horses, Whip and Smokey, up to three times a week between October and July. McGlenn's hobby has become such a priority that he no longer accepts appointments for his independent marine inspection business on Fridays.

In addition to riding Whip, McGlenn does a lot of service on the mountain with the Whatcom County chapter of the BHA.

The BHA is a group of volunteers whose primary purpose is to defend "the legal and moral claim by American people to use horses and mules for recreation on public lands." Established in Montana's Flathead Valley in 1973, the group has continued to flourish as both a club and community service organization. Its members perform more than 33,000 hours of volunteer service on public lands annually. Approximately 3,000 members in 33 chapters in Washington state do everything from trail maintenance and litter pick-up to educating the public on responsible outdoor practices.

"It was started by a group of guys sitting around a campfire, literally," McGlenn said, his silver hair catching the rays of the sun shining through his office window. "They were concerned about the stock user being pushed out of the wilderness by other groups."

Between 1996-1998 McGlenn served as the president of the BHA of Washington. He is currently running for the national chairmanship of the organization. However, at the time he joined the BHA, McGlenn knew very little about horse training or trail riding.

"I've been riding this same horse for 13 years; we learned how to do this together," he said. "When we started neither of us knew anything. I sometimes wonder if we do now."



# WORTH THE RIDE

By Laura Query  
Photos by Chris Goodenow

"When you can put together your mental training and your animal's mental and physical training and the two of you become a team ... it gives you a deep sense of accomplishment and companionship."

In their time riding together, McGlenn has come to know Whip's personality very well.

"He's a little ornery, like his owner," McGlenn chuckled.

McGlenn said he enjoys working with Whip and described the satisfaction he feels as a member of the BHA.

"It's fun," McGlenn said. "There's a great deal of satisfaction riding on a trail and seeing a log with holes in the middle of it and saying 'I sawed that log out of this trail, this trail is open because I came and worked that day.' Or you cross a bridge and think 'this bridge wouldn't be here if me and my horse didn't pack the timbers in for it.'"

The need for the services BHA provides has increased since McGlenn began riding on Blanchard Mountain in 1988. Human influence on the area, such as vandalism and litter, is great.

"Vandalism is an ugly thing," McGlenn said.

For the last three years the BHA of Whatcom and Skagit County have conducted annual garbage clean-up workdays on the mountain. An average one-day work party will collect anywhere from 1,500 to 2,200 pounds of garbage, McGlenn said.



"It always amazes me how someone can carry a full can of beer five miles to a lake and not be able to lift the empty can to carry it out," McGlenn said. "I find a paper latte cup six miles up the trail, and the wind didn't blow it there."

Vandalism is just one of many threats to Blanchard Mountain. Logging the area could have severe economic and social consequences.

"There is an economic value to a trail," McGlenn said, recalling the long line of trailers he often sees parked on the ridge near the trailhead on Blanchard Mountain. "It has to do with how many people use the trail, what they pay into the economy for gas, stables and restaurants. It's a large industry."

The mountain is known around the Northwest for its beautiful views. It is a popular recreational area for many groups.

"The impact is fairly far reaching," McGlenn said. "If you close an area, the people who were recreating there have to find a new place to go. If we can't go to Blanchard [Mountain], where are we going to go?"

A study published in the BHA Informational Booklet found that the recreational segment of the horse industry is worth nearly \$28.3 billion per year in the United States. More than 4.3 million people participate in the horse industry nationwide, and it employs 317,000 people.

For this and many other reasons, there is a current proposal to make Blanchard Mountain a Natural Resource Conservation Area. More than 28,000 acres in Whatcom County have this designation, said Mark Morrow, public information officer of the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. Making Blanchard Mountain a



NRCA would protect it from timber harvest while maintaining its accessibility. McGlenn, however, is skeptical of the NRCA proposal.

"I am not necessarily 100 percent for this NRCA designation," McGlenn said. "I would like to see the area preserved but through some other means."

McGlenn is worried that if the area were designated a NRCA it may become inaccessible to horsemen and other recreational groups.

"One of the concerns we have about making this a NRCA is that when that status is given something it can literally be fenced off and everybody closed out, depending on how it is set up," McGlenn said.

Fellow BHA member Sam Miller agrees with McGlenn that Blanchard should remain accessible to all recreational groups.

"It's a unique spot," said Miller, who has been with the Whatcom County chapter of BHA since its inception in 1986. "We sure don't want to lose it. We feel connected to that trail and have put a lot of time and effort into its maintenance."

McGlenn agrees with the way the DNR is currently managing the area.

"The DNR is, in my view, sensitive to what's being done here," McGlenn said. "They manage it in a slightly different manner than they would something that is 20 miles up in the mountain because it is more of a community forest."

The days of riding pass quickly, and for McGlenn the battle continues. Protecting his home away from home is always a challenge, but well worth the ride.



Mike McGlenn (facing page) of the Backcountry Horsemen of America and his horse, Whip, overlook a clearcut on the east side of Blanchard Mountain. McGlenn said his concern is not the clearcuts, but access to the trail system. McGlenn and Whip (above) cross a bridge on a trail frequented by horseback riders. They have been riding the trails of Blanchard Mountain together since 1988. McGlenn and Whip (left) can often be found cleaning the trails of Blanchard Mountain or maintaining the areas trails.



# FOR WHAT

## *Economics of* LOGGING

By Jon Smolensky

Photos by Chris Goodenow



The evening sun casts its light on a small patch of leave trees standing alone in the middle of a clearcut on the east side of Blanchard Mountain.

Blanchard Mountain is one of the last remaining natural environments along the Washington Interstate 5 corridor, covered with acres of forestland and wildlife. Thompson bats navigate through the caves underneath a fallen rock face in search of their nests. Large deposits of minerals coat rocks that erupt from the underbrush where the soil is too shallow for vegetation to grow. Regular visitors to the area can attest to its aesthetic value, but the future of Blanchard Mountain is in jeopardy.

Two options currently exist for Blanchard Mountain. The state will either continue to sell the mountain's timber harvest rights, or activist groups will be successful in their attempt to preserve the mountain's forests. The local economy will definitely be affected by the continued logging of the area.

"The direct benefit of logging is you produce new jobs," said John Krieg, an economics professor at Western Washington University. "The logging company may hire local residents and employ local mills to keep costs down."

New jobs in the area would attract people to the quiet communities on the Skagit Valley flatlands. More people would make money, and therefore more people would spend money. Gross domestic product would increase as money is spent and re-spent, and tax revenue, which could supplement social programs in the county, would increase.

While this process would directly affect the local community, it doesn't consider the money that the state would earn from selling timber rights to logging companies.

"Seventy-eight percent of monies from Blanchard [Mountain] go to trust beneficiaries and 22 percent go back to in-department management," said Bill Wallace, northwest regional manager for the Department of Natural Resources.

The surrounding communities could experience an increased cash flow into the area. But logging the mountain could also pump money out. The money that recreational spending and temporary residences bring into the local community could disappear.

"You eliminate other opportunities," Krieg said. "You eliminate the aesthetics of a nice place to hike, biking areas, trail areas, etcetera."

Dan Hagen, Western economics professor, agreed, saying that logging companies will not be paying the entire cost of their operations.

"When you undertake an activity that has negative spill-over effects and imposes a cost on others, that's an external cost, or an externality," Hagen said. "For example, say if by harvesting timber in a watershed, runoff increases, which increases saltation in the water stream. If you have a water treatment system down stream and more costs are incurred, the timber harvesting company has not had to pay for this, but they've imposed a third party cost."

"The real question about externalities is how to get people to pay for them," Krieg said. "Clearly timber is a product society values, so it makes little sense to ban logging outright. But if logging does cause negative externalities, how do you log and, at the same time, compensate those who have suffered through logging?"

A log processing machine is used to move cedar logs at Barrel Springs mill located at the base of Blanchard Mountain. One of the direct benefits of logging is a supply of jobs.



SEE LOGGING, PAGE 30



# IT'S WORTH

## *Economics of* RECREATION

By Sat Khalsa

Photos by Chris Goodenow

If not for the calming, balancing effects of riding the trails on local mountains, including the 4,500 acres of mature forest on Samish Bay in northern Skagit County that is Blanchard Mountain, John Hauter said he would not have the focus or energy needed to successfully own Fairhaven Bike and Mountain Sports.

"Mountain biking really helps me relax from the rigors of working all week in ownership of a small business," Hauter said. "I might go crazy if I couldn't get up to the mountains."

Local small businesses may now need to help ensure Blanchard Mountain is not logged again. Most people think that logging is the only economic derivative from the forest to the area, said Dan Hagen, Western Washington University economics professor. If no facts exist to suggest alternatives to logging, other potential economic resources on Blanchard Mountain will be ignored. The momentum of past decisions will carry revenue to be derived from logging, again, Hagen said.

"Right now we don't know the impact that recreation has on the local economy," said Don Wick, executive director of The Economic Development Association of Skagit County. "An independent survey of the mountain needs to be done to ascertain the economic impact to the county."

Unfortunately, no hard figures exist that show how much money the area receives from recreation or simply how many people visit the mountain annually, Wick said. What is known is that Blanchard Mountain is a recreational hot spot. Mountain biking, horseback riding, hiking, hang gliding, rock climbing and spelunking are all activities that require lots of gear, and local businesses derive a significant number of their customers from those who recreate on Blanchard Mountain.

"Blanchard is one of the three most popular mountains in the area," Hauter said. "Twenty percent of our customers have ridden, intend to ride, or do ride Blanchard [Mountain]. Not all of our customers see clear-cutting a problem for their riding. However, give me a choice between trees and no trees, I'll choose trees any day, especially if cutting involves closing off public lands to the public. We can make this work so we can have access to the land we own and use it in the manner we want."

Blanchard also has a trickledown economic effect to the area, said Maria Mooney, Western senior and frequent hiker.

"Spending money around this area is incidental," Mooney said. "You don't really pay attention to the fact that you go to the Texaco station off of the I-5 Bow-Edison exit and get gas and some munchies, or maybe to the Longhorn Pub for a beer and meal after your day at the mountain."

The state legislature and the Washington State Board of Natural Resources control the fate of all state trust lands, including the Blanchard Mountain area,



Shortly after launching from Blanchard Mountain's popular hang glider launch, a paraglider uses the wind current to float over Skagit Valley farmlands.

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[MOUNTAIN]."

—John Hauter

SEE RECREATION, PAGE 31



THERE IS A VERY SIMPLE WAY TO PUT A PRICE ON AESTHETICS. "ASK HOW MUCH PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO PAY FOR THE PROPERTY TO NOT HAVE IT LOGGED."

—John Krieg, professor, Western Washington University



Logging creates numerous negative externalities, such as air and land pollution, Krieg said. Recreational activities, such as horseback riding, hiking and camping diminish with clearcuts.

Lakes on Blanchard Mountain would endure negative externalities with the absence of nearby vegetation.

Logging companies do not account for externalities because they are not required to pay for them.

However, there is a very simple way to put a price on aesthetics.

"Ask how much people are willing to pay for the property to not have it logged," Krieg said.

Several interest groups have come together to find possible alternatives to logging the property. The Northwest Ecosystem Alliance and the Mount Baker Chapter of the Sierra Club have put forth an effort to preserve 3,000 of the approximately 4,500 acres of DNR-managed state trust land on Blanchard Mountain.

"Our goal is to change the management of the area," said Frank Ancock, local resident and Sierra Club member. "Every 75 years, the forest is cut. Sierra Club is trying to preserve the land."

The DNR currently practices a landscape-planning program for the Blanchard Mountain area.

According to the Forest Resource Plan, which was adopted by the Board of Natural Resources in 1992, landscape planning splits the land into two categories: Land with substantial public value, and land with minimal public value. The DNR develops logging plans only for the land with minimal public value, while the other land is retained for recreational use.

The Sierra Club believes a state process called the Trust Land Transfer Program should be put in place.

"The Trust Land Transfer Program was originally set up for school lands," said Randy Walcott, also a member of the Mount Baker Chapter of the Sierra Club. "There is a certain amount of land that the state has to keep for school revenue. It's like leasing the lands out. The timber proceeds from that land would go into school accounts. So the land is deeded to the state for the construction of schools."

The lands designated for school revenue, which the state wishes to protect, could be swapped with lands that can produce similar revenue, Walcott said.

"Basically the state buys the property from the state," Walcott said. "The state identifies land properties that should be protected. Legislature budgets money out to buy replacement lands so they can be protected."

"The SNAFU is that Blanchard Mountain is forest board transfer land," Walcott said. "If you want to run forest board through that [the transfer] program, it has to first be exchanged for common school trust land."

The controversy starts because in order for common school trust land to be exchanged, some has to be available.

"I think it's a bunch of crap," Walcott said. "The DNR has 27,000 acres to work from, and they can't find any land? It's a smoke screen. They say they have nothing to swap for Blanchard, but they just don't have the manpower to complete the transfer."

Despite the controversy, Ancock said he believes the Trust Land Transfer Program is the best option under the circumstances.

"At this time, it would transfer the land into a protected state land status," Ancock said.

So the issue has developed to its current situation: substantial contemplation about whether or not it is cost-effective to log Blanchard Mountain again.

If the state sees no benefit in transferring the land, then Blanchard Mountain may be subjected to a bidding war between logging companies. How the state chooses to manage Blanchard Mountain will influence local economics.



which is now mature enough to again facilitate harvests. The only known factor is how much money the timber is worth, and the practice of acting on only this knowledge is distressing to Hagen.

"There is a fog of ignorance on this issue," Hagen said. "DNR has an idea how much the timber is worth from Blanchard Mountain, but not its other values. This kind of asymmetry is troubling."

Washington state economics are far different today than they were a century ago when the state's constitutional framers initiated state trust land management to ensure Washington citizens would benefit from public lands. The state allocates state trust land revenue for, among other things, school construction and operating costs. State trust lands continue to carry the burden of providing revenue for the state's growing school system's needs. The Blanchard Mountain area constitutes only 4,500 acres of the total 1.8 million acres of state trust land that the DNR manages for school construction, as stated in the DNR's Final Stewardship Plan published in January of 1998. The DNR manages 1,100,000 of these acres for revenue that contributes only 26 percent of state and county school construction.

"What the DNR knows is timber management," Hagen said. "There is lots of inertia in that direction in the system. We need to make sure we don't take an asset and turn it into a water quality or another environmental issue."

Blanchard Mountain provides the DNR with an opportunity to reassess its state trust land management assumptions, allowing for the potential discovery of other sources of income from the mountain, Hagen said. Citizens and public groups, not the government, are the catalysts to derive more from their land.

"The DNR has blinders on," Hagen said. "Trust beneficiaries could do better."

To make an informed land management decision based on economics involves analysis that hasn't happened yet. The Washington State Senate has passed a bill that would fund a direct study of the public values of Blanchard Mountain including the potential revenue from all the uses of Blanchard, especially recreation, Hagen said. The Washington House of Representatives has not yet passed the bill.

The 2001 Capital State Budget includes funds for a survey of Washington State Trust Lands' economic impact to the local economies, the bill's cosponsor representative Ed Murray said. Representative Luke Esser is the other sponsor.

A separate capital budget item was also added to the Senate version of the state budget to specifically survey Blanchard Mountain, said Lisa McShane, community outreach director of the Northwest Ecosystem Alliance.

The additional funds needed for a survey of Blanchard Mountain is not certain in the final state budget. Between state House and Senate revisions, the additional budget item may or may not be included.

Without a survey of Blanchard Mountain we have too narrow of a view on how the state might benefit from the land, Hagen said.

"At this point ignorance is a very expensive investment," Hagen said.

While the future of Blanchard Mountain depends on economic theory, political results, and public influence on the legislature, the mountain continues to contribute to the quality of life of many in the area — either directly through recreation, or indirectly as money trickles down from the slopes of Blanchard Mountain to local businesses.

Blanchard Mountain is one of the closest spots for hiking and rock climbing for Western students, Western Associated Students Outdoor Center employee Benson Isley said.

"Having such close access to so many great recreational spots helps you keep your regular life going, well, regularly," Isley said. "Going to the mountain is kind of a spirit recharger for me and a lot of my friends."

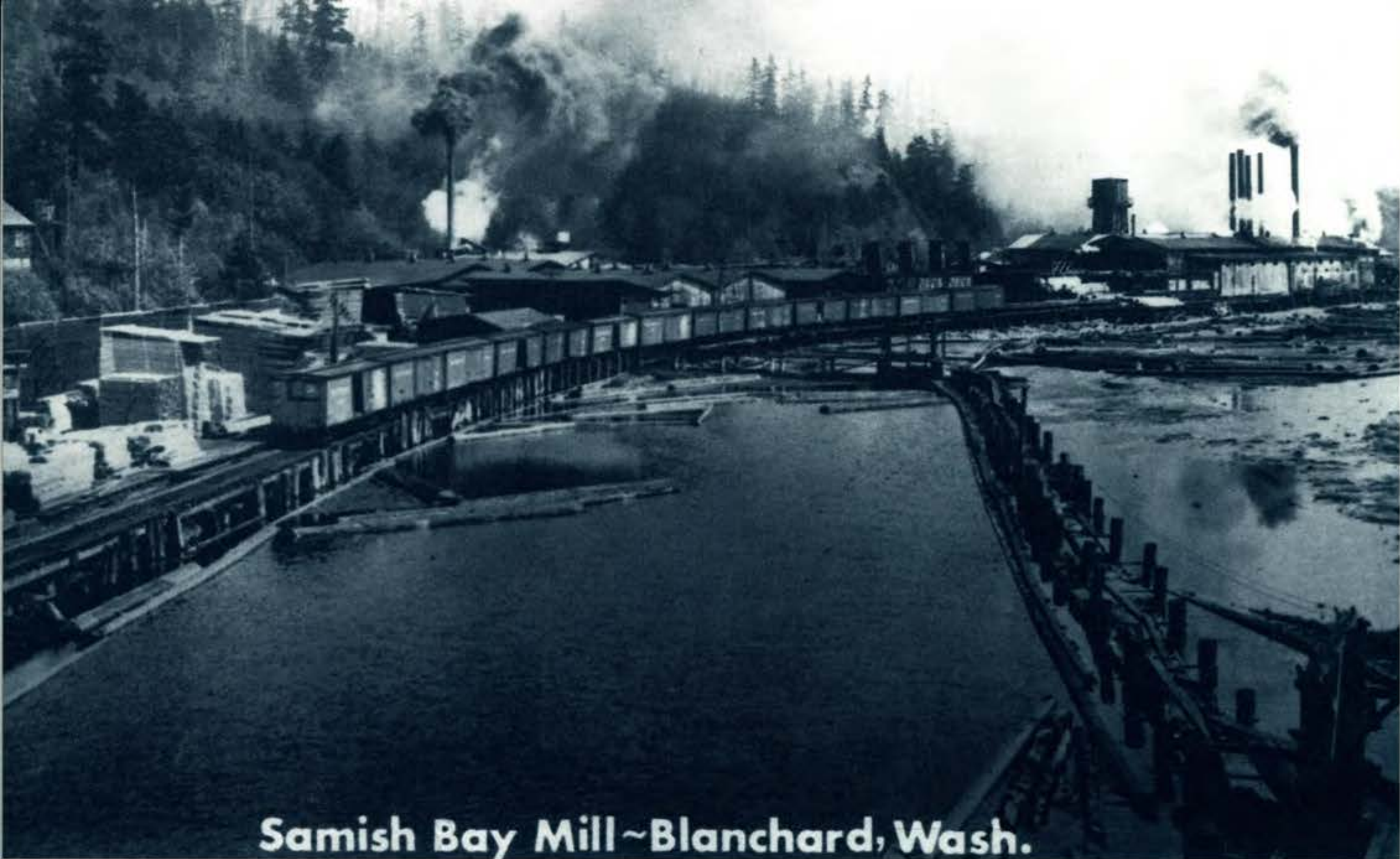


Blanchard Mountain provides many kinds of recreation, including hiking (above) and climbing (below) which in turn, provides a demand that feeds the recreation industry.

A group of cedar logs (facing page) waits to be cut into lumber at the Barrel Springs mill.







Samish Bay Mill ~Blanchard, Wash.

# LIVING IN THE SHADOW OF THE MOUNTAIN

*By Sarah Loehndorf*

*Photos by Matt Parker*



Image of Samish Bay Mill (above), Blanchard, Wash., taken from a postcard. Courtesy of Joanne Prentice.

The clanking of the railroad and the distant yells of “timber” died out years ago, but Joanne Prentice can still hear them vividly. This longtime citizen will not forget the booming town that Blanchard, Wash. once was. She not only holds the keys to the community club, but she is also the unofficial community historian.

Prentice moved to Blanchard as a new bride in 1946 after the troops returned from World War II. Homes were hard to come by, but eventually she found a house in Blanchard.

Although she arrived several years after the lumber mill closed its doors, Prentice said she will not forget the effect.

“Blanchard was never a farming or logging community,” she said. “Initially Blanchard was a mill community that processed logs from the hill.”

During this time Blanchard was surrounded by prime timber. Loggers came to Blanchard and set up camps in the town. But the mill was the permanent fixture.





During the early 20th century the mill helped Blanchard's population grow to more than 1,000. Today, Prentice said, "it has a population of about 60-odd people."

John Fravel was a settler in Blanchard in the early 1900s. Fravel had plans to run a telegraph line through Bellingham to Siberia. Unfortunately, a telegraph line was placed in the Atlantic Ocean instead, forcing Fravel to abandon his plans. Fravel settled in Blanchard where he reopened the post office that became one of the social centers of the town.

"The most historical thing that happened to Blanchard is that it got here, that it just happened," Prentice said. "It looks like nothing ever goes on here, and nothing ever does; it just comes through."

Every house in Blanchard had a story, every tree and plant a tale. A pile of old wood that once was a house now lies on the muddy ground. Its former owner, a Japanese woman, was sent to an internment camp in the late 1940s, and never returned to Blanchard.

In the early 1900s, Japanese immigrants ran the oyster business in town, which replaced the mill. Oyster farming thrived in Blanchard until 1991 when the plant was sold and to a company in Shelton.

Around the same time the lumber mill was in full swing, trains passed through the town stopping at the small Blanchard train depot. Built in the late 1800s, the train depot, now the Blanchard Community Club, has continued to fulfill many of the area's needs. As Prentice walked up the stairs the wooden planks creaked from old age.

"We have potlucks and old-timers picnics," she said. "Not a lot of people come to meetings. People are not used to community participation. Society itself has changed, not just Blanchard."

Inside the community center it was evident just how much things had changed. A tattered American flag with 48 stars hangs on the wall. Years ago it flew above the Blanchard School.

Over the door, a train schedule printed on a chalkboard displayed the time for a train destined for Seattle in 1924.

"We found the chalkboard in 1985 in the attic, with the original times for the train," she said.

The board was spotless. Still hanging in mint condition, it gave the feeling a ghost train bound for Seattle would be pulling into the small depot any second, without the town's residents batting an eye.

A large framed picture hung above the chalkboard displaying a man gazing astutely off into the distance. A small hand written note below the image revealed the identity of the dignified man to be Edward R. Murrow. Murrow lived in Blanchard from 1913-1925. Though Murrow was one of the founding fathers of television journalism and a veteran war correspondent, he is

Located in the heart of the town, the former train depot is now the community club (above, left). Monthly town meetings and old timers picnics are held in the community club. The club overlooks Blanchard Mountain.

A photo that Joanne Prentice presented on posterboard at a Blanchard Town meeting. The children in the photo were known for playing with the loggers. "The loggers were very kind to the children," Prentice said.

OVER THE DOOR, A  
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PRINTED ON A  
CHALKBOARD DISPLAYED  
THE TIME FOR A TRAIN  
DESTINED FOR SEATTLE  
IN 1924.





"BLANCHARD IS NOWHERE IN THE  
MIDDLE OF EVERYWHERE."

—Joanne Prentice



A turn of the century photo shows the logging transportation system (above, top). Courtesy of Joanne Prentice.

A group of people (above, bottom) display an old logging saw in this 1922 photo. Courtesy of Joanne Prentice.

most famous for his 1954 exposé on accusations made by U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy who falsely claimed many prominent Americans were communists. While most journalists reprinted the senator's lies without question, Murrow confronted him on a CBS television program that drastically changed public opinion and eventually led to McCarthy's censure and fall from political prominence.

As Prentice strolled through town, many neighbors opened their doors, got off their bikes or slowed their cars down as they drove by to wave at Prentice. Katherine Charles stopped her bike to talk to Prentice. Charles now occupies the house Murrow once owned.

While working at CBS, Murrow often said he would trade it all to sit on the dike at Blanchard with a gun, waiting for a duck to fly by.

Charles moved to Blanchard looking for a farmhouse, but when she came across Murrow's, her family quickly settled there. She has been a part of the Blanchard community for several years. She attended the meeting earlier in March to discuss the logging of Blanchard Mountain.

"I worry about the water source," she said. "I worry that the water source will be contaminated from logging. Visually, I am not looking forward to it."

Blanchard Mountain is the only part of the Cascade mountain range that touches the ocean. The view draws nature enthusiasts, parasailers, hikers and horseback riders to the area.

"Logging wasn't discussed as much as the recreational and ecological aspects," Prentice said. "We are not a logging community. We do not approach the mountain with a logger's point of view. We would like to have Blanchard Mountain managed intelligently, towards clean water and air."

Prentice leads the monthly meetings. Many of the residents share the same sentiments as Prentice regarding their community. George Thalan has lived in Blanchard for 15 years.

"We potentially could have a major problem on how it [logging] is done," he said. "It could be a major flood issue."

The town of Blanchard lies just beneath Blanchard Mountain. Many residents fear that flooding would result from logging. If the trees were logged, the water that is normally absorbed by the trees and plants could instead be diverted down the mountain and into the town.

Residents are not the only ones who have the logging of Blanchard Mountain on their mind. Bellingham resident JoAnn Roe has researched Blanchard and wrote a book titled *Ghost Camps and Boom Towns*. She also commented on the proposed logging of Blanchard Mountain.

"Logging is like farming," she said. "It depends what situation it is. Some land is better to be farmed. Trees have a finite life; they live 300 years and



fall down — not all would have to be saved.”

Many people, both in and out of the Blanchard area, feel logging will not affect Blanchard. Logging does not hold the massive influence on the community that it once did. Fewer than a handful of people in Blanchard can remember the times of logging, but long time resident Frank Pratt grew up in a family where logging was a way of life.

Pratt was born in Blanchard in 1915. His father worked at the Blanchard Mill.

“When we were kids, we couldn’t go in, but we could see some of the action,” Pratt said of the mill. “There was always a great big fire going. At times it was so hard to breathe from the smoke in town.”

Pratt said the logging process has always intrigued him.

“I like to see it,” he said. “It always fascinates me. All manual labor — no chain saws or anything like that. Just a bunch of hard working people.”

If Blanchard Mountain were logged today, it would be done using more machines and far fewer people. In the early 1900s, each tree had to be cut down by several men one at a time.

Just as some people feel Blanchard Mountain needs to be preserved, Prentice feels the town of Blanchard and its history should be, as well.

“Everyone in life has a job,” she said. “This is my job. If anyone is as lucky to have a job like this, as I am, then count your blessings.”

As she walked through the quiet town, she pointed to a vacant lot that years before had been a house or a store. She recalled, story after story, anecdotes of the past. The images became so vivid that they began to transform the town. The ghost town began to disappear and a new town stood in its place. She no longer walked through the empty, muddy streets of Blanchard. The quiet was replaced with the sound of giggling children, women gossiping about their neighbors and people running in and out of the old Blanchard Grocery.

After walking a few minutes in silence she said, “If you have to live nowhere, this is the best place to live.”

Blanchard may be a small town, but it was evident what she meant when she said “Blanchard is nowhere in the middle of everywhere.” Over the past 100 years it has touched nearly every part of the world, leaving Prentice a heritage and a legacy to leave behind.

One of Blanchard’s first churches still stands just a short walk from Joanne Prentice’s house.

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INTELLIGENTLY,  
TOWARDS CLEAN WATER  
AND AIR.”

—Joanne Prentice, Blanchard resident





# A WALK IN THE WOODS



By Kate Koch  
Photos by  
Matt Parker

*"I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded to stay out 'til sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in."  
—John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir, 1938.*

Shoe in hand, I sat next to a nameless creek and massaged my aching foot. The woods had kept a close watch over me all day. They leaned in closer now for a better look at what ailed me. With my sock off and my shoe balancing on a narrow log fallen across the creek, I lost myself gazing at the clear water as it wove around the rocks littering the creek bed.

It seemed like days ago I left the safety of my car, shouldered my backpack and began the trek up Blanchard Mountain from the Lily and Lizard Lake lower trailhead. The crisp morning air turned my breath into fog as I trudged up the muddy trail.

I was alone, but I was not afraid. I felt empowered to be on that trail alone, a strong woman taking on nature for the day. The blood pumped hard through my veins and warmed up my winter-cooled heart. The incline gradually became steeper, just challenging enough to keep me motivated.

**It seemed like days ago I left the safety of my car, shouldered**







## my backpack and began the trek up Blanchard Mountain.

*"Only by going alone in silence, without baggage, can one truly get into the heart of the wilderness. All other travel is mere dust and hotels and baggage and chatter."*

— In a letter to his wife, Louie, 1888

Soon a bridge came into view and the sound of a small stream trickling around rocks, Whitehall Creek. I scooped up a handful of the cool water from the creek and splashed it on my face, then skipped from rock to rock across the stream and back to the trail. The thickness of the woods had closed completely around me and the road had long since disappeared from view.

The forest creaked and whistled in the morning wind. Trees waved back and forth at the mercy of coastal breezes and I stopped to watch them. My eyes following the flowing branches, I found myself swaying from side to side as the filtered sun kissed my cheeks through the holes in the canopy.

*"Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves."*

— Our National Parks, 1911





More impressive than the trees themselves were the stumps of trees long since turned into the world's needs and wants. They remained scattered across the slope. The stumps were as big as four feet in diameter and stood five to six feet tall, notched out on the sides for logger's springboards. Some hollow, some torched from summer forest fires, all rotting but clinging to their terra firma. Many provide a starting place for new life. Little seedlings, Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), ferns, and various others rooted themselves in the decomposing wood of these stumps and sprung from their sawed off tops.

I stopped where the Pacific Northwest Trail meets the Lily and Lizard Lake trail and drank some water. The sun had begun to peek around the clouds more often now but I could barely see its rays; the forest was very thick there.

When I started again my heart had stopped pounding in my ears and I felt a renewed energy. I picked up a walking stick and attacked another incline. I was sure I'd gone up for miles and my chest felt heavier with each breath, my legs weaker with

every step. The forest had changed from the coniferous Douglas fir to the deciduous red alder (*Alnus rubra*). The sun filtered easily through these bare, early spring trees.

Then, for the first time, a sense of fear washed over me. I looked around and searched for what caused it. I followed the trail around a bend and almost tripped into a bog-like lake. It was a brown cesspool with straight white trees growing from its murky depths. Elevated above it I could peer into its waters, down to the bottom of the shallow area near its pseudo shoreline. Bleached skeletons of submerged logs glowed eerily from their watery grave. On second glance the white trees were mere skeletons themselves, cracked off at the top from some horrific storm decades ago, destined to maintain their upright stance in the purgatory of hot summer sun and blistering winter wind.

I hurried down the path avoiding the mysterious calmness of Lily Lake whose only joyful expression is in the yellow blooms of Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) sprinkled along the shore.

*"By forces seemingly antagonistic and destructive Nature accomplishes her beneficent designs — now a flood of fire, now a flood of ice, now a flood of water; and again in the fullness of time an outburst of organic life..."*

— Steep Trails, 1874

Just beyond Lily Lake was the beginning of a trail called Max's Shortcut, but where it led was a mystery. My map was no help, as the Department of Natural Resources did not

label some trails accurately and completely left out others. I decided to go straight and crossed the creek draining from Lily Lake and headed down the Oyster Dome trail.

It felt good to go down hill. My sweat soaked shirt helped the wind cool my tired body. I listened to the symphony of birds singing in the canopy and thumped down the trail at a quickened pace.

Taking the right fork of the next trail junction I crossed the creek again. My curiosity pulled me, huffing and puffing, up the steepest slope I had encountered, the useless map in my hand. When it seemed the incline would never end, the trees began to get shorter. The forest floor was a blanket of

red-brown needles and the trail disappeared. I walked towards a break in the trees and saw sky, then rock and finally a fantastic view of Puget Sound and Samish Bay. I stood on the Oyster Dome looking out across the calm sparkling waters.

I relaxed on the rocks, soaking up the early afternoon sun watching the changing shapes in the clouds being pulled across the sky. The white scar of the old logging road leading up to the

hang glider launch vividly reflected the afternoon sun. Directly below Oyster Dome the bat caves echoed the sound of hiker's voices and the Samish Bay waters glistened and danced with the gentle push of the coastal wind. A lone sailboat cut the water just beyond the shore's oyster beds.

*"The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness..."*

— John of the Mountains

A Stellar's jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) boldly hopped out of the bush directly behind me and stood on the gravel rock five feet from where I sat. I jumped, startled by the presence of another creature. His beautiful blue feathers shimmered in the sunlight as he danced across the surface of the ground, hopping from tree to rock but keeping his eye on my every movement. I tried to take a picture but he flew away with the click of my shutter. I climbed to my feet. Following his example, I headed back down the slope.

I inched down steepening trails. At one point I had to turn around completely and hold on to roots protruding from the ground and descend the trail like a ladder. My shoulders ached and my muscles tightened under the weight of my backpack. My socks twisted and gouged at my tender feet with every step downward. My toes squished towards the end of my shoe as I carefully, painfully crept downhill.

When the ground leveled off I came to a shallow creek trickling across my path. For the first time I sat down and eased the great pressure on my feet. I let the forest go on





around me, no longer trying to see it all; I just let it run through me as this stream ran through it. I was more than halfway home now but all I wanted to do was just sit here by this creek and let my eyes focus and unfocus on the crisp clear water.

*"Come to the woods, for here is rest. There is no repose like that of the green deep woods. Here grow the wallflower and the violet. The squirrel will come and sit up on your knee, the logcock will wake you in the morning. Sleep in forgetfulness of all ill. Of all the upness accessible to mortals, there is no upness comparable to the mountains."*

— John of the Mountains, 1875

Renewed and refreshed by the cool waters of the stream I continued down the path, aiming for the hangglider launch at this trail's end. Soon the dark safety of the forest began to brighten into a recently cut portion of the forest. The clouds of insects became thicker, great hordes of black ones buzzing in a ball in the middle of the path. I fanned them with my map as I walked. The sun felt hotter here. I squinted against it and stopped every chance I could in the shade of trees not too much taller than I.

The trail came out at the hangglider launch and I stopped to see how far I'd come. The Oyster Dome was far in the distance and Samish Bay was just down the slope. The moment I was still flies of all colors and sizes began to swarm around the glistening sweat of my exposed skin. I flailed my arms wildly to keep the pests away but it didn't really work. I gave up and began walking again across the large gravel parking lot, looking for the other half of my trail.

I wondered why so few people were here on such a beautiful day. No cars littered the crude parking lot. A lone hang glider rested on the arms of the wind, making dramatic turns like a giant dragonfly in the sky. Another readied his craft for launch. The mountain must see fewer people on weekdays, as they are all at work or in stuffy classrooms at school, perhaps glued to the television.

Again I returned to the woods finding the trail marked PNT, on the home stretch. Most of these woods I had seen before on the trek up the mountain. But this time I slowed to really look at them. Bracket fungus (*Ganoderma applanatum*)

clung to the sides of some trees quietly living out their existence in muted gold and orange hews. A snake slithered across my path and into a hole in the forest floor. A woodpecker pounded into a tree.

The road came into view and I felt compelled to turn around and go back to the deep forest. But I didn't.

Then I heard the hushed roar of Whitehall creek. I inched up and stepped on the wooden bridge across it. I could barely hear the sound of my feet on the boards, walking softer than the first time I'd crossed. I watched the clear water splash into itself, weave around boulders and branches in its path and then disappear under the bridge in a seemingly endless cycle. With the impending drought I wondered if the creek would still be there in August.

*"There is no place impressively solitary as a dense forest with a stream passing over a rocky bed at a moderate inclination."*

— John of the Mountains

I left the stream and within minutes I was in the familiar comfort of my car breathing in the toxic fumes of "new car scent" and readapting to the familiar.

I drove up to the top of the road instead of back home, inching along the gravel and soaking up all the nature I could from the open window of my car. Birch trees bent in an arch over the road and the sun peeked through the spaces in their branches. I was content for now but my mind drifted back to the deep dark woods, the skunk cabbage of Lily Lake, the Stellar's jay at Oyster Dome, the shafts of sun peeking through the dense canopy and Whitehall Creek running across my path. I relished in the shade of the alder trees and smelled their bark from my car window, eyes half closed, imagining a time when I would be among them again.

*"Government protection should be thrown around every wild grove and forest on the mountains, as it is around every private orchard, and the trees in public parks. To say nothing of their value as fountains of timber, they are worth infinitely more than all the gardens and parks of town."*

— John of the Mountains

*A strong advocate of valuing nature in itself, John Muir, a Scottish-born naturalist, spent most of his life traveling by foot through many different landscapes in America and across the world. After attending college at the University of Wisconsin for three years he quit and took his most famous walk from Indianapolis to the Gulf of Mexico. But he truly found solace beneath any forest canopy, regardless of the area.*

*On his long walks he learned much about natural interactions and catalogued countless plant and animal species by their scientific names in his journals. This understanding is reflected in his words and insight into how human beings should treat the land they inhabit.*



