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STUDY and RECLASSIFICATION
of the
NORTH CASCADES PRIMITIVE AREA

Mt. Baker and Okanogan National Forests



Party pauses on trail overlooking Goat Lake Basin, Mt. Baker National Forest



U. S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Pacific Northwest Region
1960

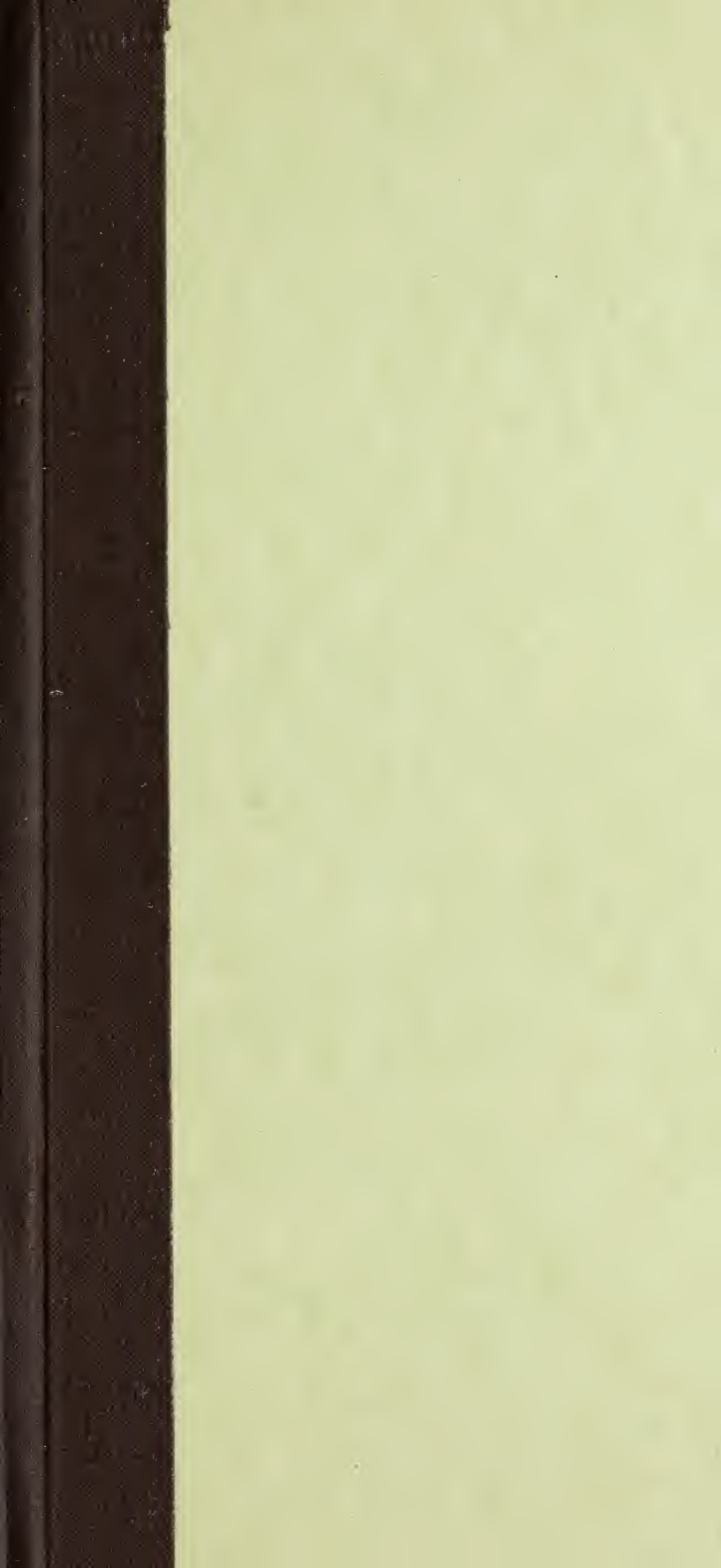
STUDY AND RECLASSIFICATION OF THE NORTH CASCADE PRIMITIVE AREA

The North Cascade Primitive Area, comprising 801,000 acres of national forest land, is presently under study by the U. S. Forest Service. The study is part of a nation-wide schedule to review primitive areas on all national forests to determine their suitability for reclassification as Wilderness under revised regulations. The revised regulations define Wilderness use and protection more fully than earlier regulations under which primitive areas were established originally.

History of Wilderness Dedication

The Forest Service initiated the Wilderness concept. In the 1920's studies of the North Cascades and similar areas in other regions gave early recognition to Wilderness values. The Department of Agriculture adopted regulations in 1929 which provided for classification and protection of these values. The lands so classified were named Primitive Areas (Regulation L-20). By 1939, eight Primitive Areas totaling 1,692,243 acres had been established on ten national forests of the Pacific Northwest Region. The North Cascade Primitive Area was the largest of this group.

As experience in the management and protection of primitive areas was gained, it became apparent more definitive regulations were needed to maintain the Wilderness environment fully. Department of Agriculture regulations were revised in 1939 (Regulations U-1 and U-2) to provide new authority for establishment and protective management of these national forest lands which were renamed Wilderness and Wild areas.



Under Wilderness or Wild classification no timber will be harvested, no roads will be built and no commercial development will be permitted. Grazing of livestock, hunting, fishing, and prospecting are permitted on national forest Wilderness areas.

There are now two Wilderness areas, nine Wild areas, and two remaining Primitive areas, totaling 1,675,318 acres in the Pacific Northwest Region. These constitute about 7.2% of the national forest land area of the region. In addition to this, 422,925 acres have been proposed as a Glacier Peak Wilderness Area.

The North Cascades

The North Cascades Primitive Area is located on the Mt. Baker and Okanogan National Forests. It adjoins the International Boundary between Canada and the United States on the north and extends southward astride the Cascade Mountain Range approximately 20 miles. Elevations vary from about 1,500 feet near the Skagit River to over 9,000 feet at the summit of the highest peaks. The Primitive Area includes



Looking south from near the Canadian Boundary. Quartz Lake in foreground.

many forest types and conditions ranging from heavily forested slopes on the lower elevations to alpine meadows, open grasslands, rock barrens, snow fields, and glaciers on the higher peaks. Ross Lake divides the area, stretching from Ross Dam northward into Canada.



Looking north up Ross Lake
from Devils Dome Trail

Wilderness in Multiple Use Management

National forests are managed for multiple use and sustained yield. The requirements of our growing population for more complete use of all national forest resources are increasing steadily, not only in the northwest but also throughout the nation. There are greater numbers of people to camp, ski, and relax on the national forests. More wood products are needed. A greater number of hunters and fishermen are seeking recreation and bag limits on the game ranges, streams, and lakes. Industries need additional water and power generated by the run-off from national

forest areas. More people are interested in Wilderness and in the beauty and solitude it provides. These growing requirements cannot be met by adding to the area of forest land. Indeed, the area of national forests will probably be reduced in some degree by the acres required for reservoirs, transmission lines, roads, and similar essential developments in the years ahead. The needs of the future can be met only by intensive, harmonious management carefully planned and fully implemented for all forest land resources. Wilderness is a recognized and important use of national forest land. Dedication of forest land to Wilderness requires detailed study. Wilderness use, like any use, must be coordinated with all the other resources of the forest.

Ranger district multiple use plans will be the basis for study of the North Cascades area. Multiple use plans are made for each national forest ranger district. The objective of each plan is to provide management practices to all the various renew-



The Pasayten Airfield is 17 miles from the nearest road. Aerial view looking north down Pasayten River. Canada in distance.

able surface resources of the ranger districts so they are utilized in the combination which will best serve the needs of the American people. They aim at the most judicious use of the land for some or all of these resources or related services over areas large enough to provide sufficient latitude for periodic adjustments in use to conform to changing needs and conditions.

The Study

The study of the North Cascades Primitive Area is currently under way and will extend into 1961. All available resource information and needs will be reviewed. In addition, the study will give consideration to the views and opinions of the public. The views of all interested groups and individuals are invited. Comments should be directed to the supervisors of the Mt. Baker National Forest in Bellingham, Washington, and the Okanogan National Forest in Okanogan, Washington. To receive full consideration they should be received prior to December 1, 1960.



