Preserving Nature through Film: Wilderness Alps of Stehekin and the North Cascades, 1956-1968

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Date of Publication
Spring 6-20-2013

Document Type
Thesis

Degree Name
Master of Arts (M.A.) in Geography

Department
Geography

Language
English

Subjects
Brower, David (1912-2000), North Cascades National Park (Wash.) -- History, Conservation of natural resources -- Washington (State) -- Stehekin River Valley

DOI
10.15760/etd.973

Physical Description
1 online resource (ix, 93 pages)

Abstract
On March 22, 1958 David Brower’s film Wilderness Alps of Stehekin premiered to an audience of conservationists in Seattle, Washington. Almost two years in the making, the thirty-one minute film advocated the preservation of nature in Washington’s North Cascades through the creation of a national park. Over the next decade, Wilderness Alps of Stehekin became the most influential publicity tool in the struggle to preserve the North Cascades. Because of the region’s geographic isolation, the film was the first time many people throughout the nation were exposed to the scenic grandeur of the area. Images of craggy peaks and colorful alpine meadows resonated deeply with many Americans and persuaded them to join in the campaign. It was the voice of these citizens that led Congress to pass the North Cascades Act of 1968, which placed 674,000 acres of the North Cascades under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service.

In this thesis I tell the creation story of North Cascades National Park from a conservationist perspective and trace the influence of Wilderness Alps of Stehekin within this context. Although the film was never shown in movie theaters and never aired on national television, many thousands viewed it from its premiere to the signing of the North Cascades Act. The film first introduced the idea of a North Cascades National Park, and it was important in convincing conservationists to unite around a national park solution. Ultimately, Wilderness Alps of Stehekin changed the approach activists took in the North Cascades and helped to preserve a wild and scenic nature experience for future generations through the protection of old-growth forests and alpine meadows.

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Persistent Identifier
2017. Preserving Nature through Film: Wilderness Alps of Stehekin and the North Cascades, 1956-1968. NT Bergmann. 2013. The system can't perform the operation now. Try again later. Articles 1–9. Show more. Films are nominated for the Registry by film professionals, scholars, and the public. This year’s additions will bring the list to 650 -- a tiny, tiny fraction of the collection the Library of Congress stores here. The largest anywhere, its collection has 1.4 million films, TV and video recordings. If this place suggests a secret, Cold War bunker, that’s exactly what it used to be. "It was a nuclear bomb-proof underground bunker that was a part of the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank system," said Lukow. It was where billions of dollars of coins and currency was stored for use after Venture Into the Wild ‘American Alps’. Washington’s North Cascades National Park offer a mix of recreation and true wilderness. 2 Minute Read. The national park forms one unit of the North Cascades National Park Service Complex. The two other units—Ross Lake National Recreation Area and Lake Chelan National Recreation Area—contain most visitor facilities. In 1956, Canadian author Jack Kerouac found solace (and inspiration for two novels) in a cabin on Desolation Peak, where he worked for the Park Service as a fire spotter for 63 days. In The Dharma Bums, he writes, "I went out in my alpine yard and there it was hundreds of miles of pure snow-covered rocks and virgin lakes and high timber Below, instead of the world, I saw a sea of marshmallow clouds." Fun Fact. Patrick Goldsworthy’s initial entry into hiking was through the original Sierra Club Chapter in his hometown of Berkeley, California, where he realized it took citizens’ active participation to protect the beautiful places they loved. Goldsworthy was elected chairman, a position he held until 1956, and the first hearing he attended was in support of Three Sisters Wilderness in Oregon. From there, the group moved on to address the issue of Glacier Peak Wilderness. Exploring the Northwest with Conservation. In 1958 the Sierra Club released a film featuring original footage of remote, beautiful locations in the Cascades, titled Wilderness Alps of Stehekin. In 1969 Goldsworthy was appointed the sole citizen member of the North Cascades National Park Master Plan Team.