



Hiking the Entiat

WTA's guide to a magnificent and threatened region

By Craig Romano

From glacial ice clinging to 9,000-foot giants, Mount Maude and Seven Fingered Jack, the Entiat River begins its tumbling 50-mile journey eastward to the Columbia River. Taking its name from a Native American word meaning "rapid water," the Entiat flows freely and unharnessed, draining a sprawling, spectacular tract of the east slope of the Central Cascades. Within this expanse are countless cloud-piercing craggy summits, gentle rolling peaks and ridges, sprawling sun-kissed lawns bursting with wildflowers, cool subalpine forests offering respite from the sweltering sun, babbling creeks, sparkling icy alpine lakes and abundant wildlife.

The Entiat and its prominent tributaries flow through deep, glacier-carved valleys shadowed by rows of prominent subranges. The Chelan Mountains form a 6,000- to 9,000-foot wall to the north. The Entiat Mountains form a long lofty barrier to the south.

An extensive trail system traverses the Entiat country. The region's relative remoteness from population centers usually assures lonesome wandering, yet a few of the area's trails can still attract a

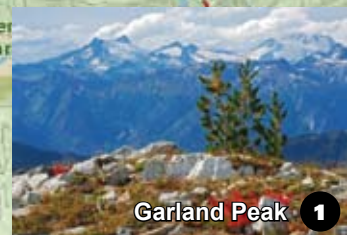
good crowd on a sunny weekend. While the upper reaches of the Entiat are protected within the Glacier Peak Wilderness, the North Fork Entiat Basin and the upper Mad River Country, two significant and outstanding roadless areas, are not protected. Citizen protest spearheaded by pioneer guidebook authors Harvey Manning and Ira Spring led the Forest Service to reconsider its allowance of motorized recreation in the North Fork Entiat Basin.

However, motorcycles still break the silence and trench the soft pumiceous soils of the upper Mad River country. But don't let them keep you away from this outstanding backcountry of rolling ridges and flowered lawns. The wheels are barred from mid-October to July 15 and use is light in the summer during the week. And perhaps someday with help from your activism, Congress will include this spectacular roadless area along with the North Fork Entiat within federally protected wilderness.

In the meantime, here are a handful of outstanding hikes to help get you exploring the Entiat country this season.

Left: Upper Mad River Trail. Right: Pyramid Mountain and wildflowers from Duncan Hill. The trails of the Entiat region offer spectacular hiking opportunities. But increasing motorized recreation in some areas threatens the area's fragile beauty.

Entiat Region Trails



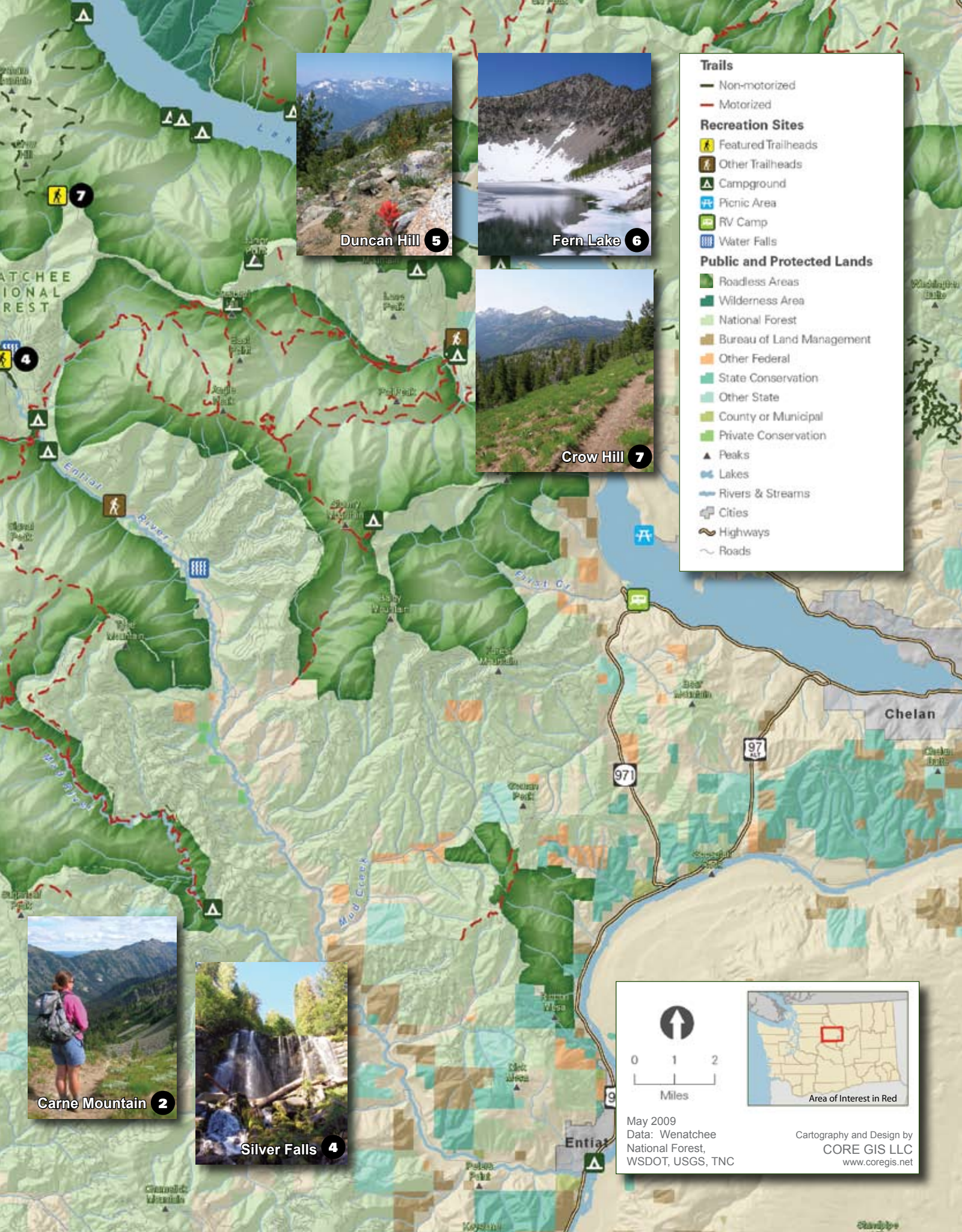
Garland Peak 1



Cougar Mountain 3



Mad River 8



Trails

- Non-motorized
- - - Motorized

Recreation Sites

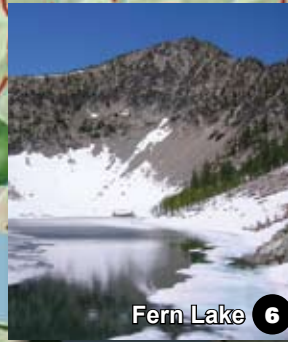
- Featured Trailheads
- Other Trailheads
- Campground
- Picnic Area
- RV Camp
- Water Falls

Public and Protected Lands

- Roadless Areas
- Wilderness Area
- National Forest
- Bureau of Land Management
- Other Federal
- State Conservation
- Other State
- County or Municipal
- Private Conservation
- Peaks
- Lakes
- Rivers & Streams
- Cities
- Highways
- Roads



Duncan Hill 5



Fern Lake 6



Crow Hill 7



Carne Mountain 2



Silver Falls 4



Area of Interest in Red

May 2009
Data: Wenatchee
National Forest,
WSDOT, USGS, TNC

Cartography and Design by
CORE GIS LLC
www.coregis.net



Lake Chelan from Crow Hill, a high alpine wonderland in the Chelan Mountains. Photo by Craig Romano.

① Garland Peak

Round trip: 10.4 miles
Elevation gain: 3,550 feet
High point: 7,400 feet

The first half of this hike is a brutally steep and brushy, curse-inducing slog. The second half is absolutely breathtaking! Follow the Basalt Pass Trail 1.7 miserable miles to Basalt Ridge. Turn right and ascend an open 6,763-foot knoll. The views are good here, but it gets better. Drop a little, then continue climbing, traversing a huge field of pumice. At 5.2 miles, reach the Garland Peak Trail on a 7,400-foot knoll high in the Entiat Mountains. Feast on ridges and peaks for as far as the eye can see, from Glacier Peak to the craggy fortress of the Chelan Mountains.

② Carne Mountain

Round trip: 8.0 miles
Elevation gain: 3,600 feet
High point: 7,085 feet

Carne is one of the finest viewing outposts in the Entiat Mountains.

The trail is well-built, albeit steep. An excellent alpine choice in early summer, come for the wildflowers. Or forgo the floral show and arrive later for the larches. Starting from the Phelps Creek trailhead, don't despair if the parking lot is overflowing. Ninety percent of those vehicles belong to hikers heading to Spider Meadow. The trail to Carne immediately commences

to climb-switchbacking at times and shooting straight up at others. After 3.0 miles of climbing enter a high hanging basin laced in larch and brushed with brilliant blossoms. Continue another mile to Carne's 7,085-foot summit enjoying a panorama of pointy peaks and deep valleys.

③ Cougar Mountain

Round trip: 10.0 miles
Elevation gain: 2,350 feet
High point: 6,701 feet

Open to motorcycles July 15 to mid-October.

Follow a babbling brook through pine forests and fields of dazzling wildflowers to a long gone lookout site. Gaze out at beautiful landscapes near and far—from verdant Cougar Meadows to the sun-baked wheat fields of the Waterville Plateau. Start by following the well-traveled Mad River Trail 1.3 miles to the easy-to-miss lightly-used Jimmy Creek Trail. Then travel upwards to the Cougar Ridge Trail. Head left through meadows and along the demarcation between burned and unburned forest reaching a junction with the Cougar summit spur trail. Follow this made-for-wheels path to the open summit.

④ Silver Falls

Roundtrip: 1.8 miles
Elevation gain: 700 feet
High point: 3,100 feet

This is perhaps the most popular hike within the entire Entiat Valley, and Silver Falls is one of the prettiest cascades in all the Cascades. Silver Creek forms a silvery veil, dropping 140 feet over shiny granite slabs lined with stately pines. And while the falls themselves are a real treat, the loop trail leading to, below, and above them is sure to delight even more—especially children.

⑤ Duncan Hill

Round trip: 13.6 miles
Elevation gain: 3,000 feet
High point: 7,819 feet

Open to motorcycles (very light use).

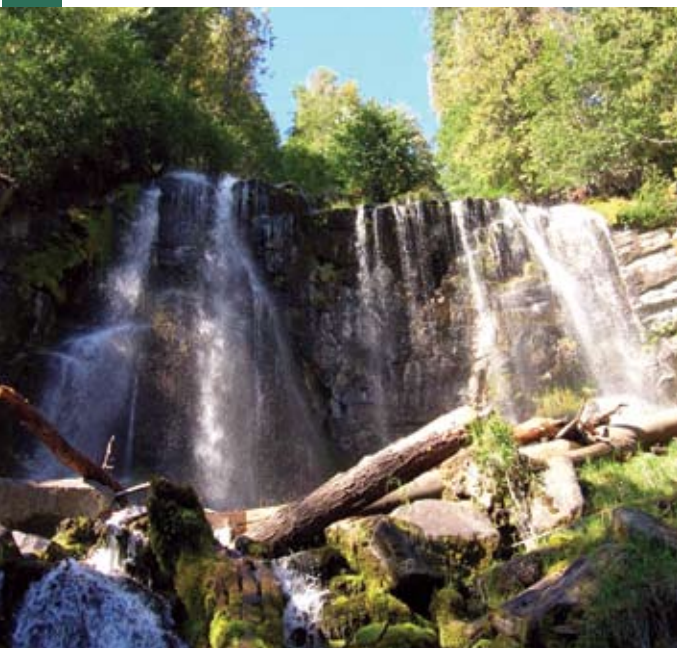
At 7,819 feet, Duncan is no hill. It's a bona fide reach-for-the-clouds mountain, providing a panoramic perspective of peaks galore—from glistening Glacier Peak to Mount Rainier. It's a long way to those views, however, but the first half of this hike is fairly easy walking. Start in a solid stand of subalpine fir and lodgepole pine before reaching a pretty little meadow about midway. The way then turns steeper. Crest a ridge cradling a larch-lined basin; then skirt beneath the summit block, traversing wide-open steep slopes. Stare 4,000 feet straight down into the Entiat Valley!

⑥ Fern Lake

Round trip: 15.0 miles
Elevation gain: 3,000 feet
High point: 6,900 feet

Here's a trip to a high, lonely lake deep in a wilderness valley short on visitors and long on solitude. The hike is long, but most of it is easy along the North Fork of the Entiat River. The final stretch, however, is a real killer—a steep grunt up

Silver Falls, a lovely 1.8-mile round-trip hike that's great for kids. Photo by Craig Romano.



rock, ledge and eroded tread. Set in a high bowl beneath granite spires and flanked with ledges, talus and larch, Fern could be right out of the Enchantments, except there'll probably be nobody else up there! Best to go late in the season for you'll need to ford the North Fork before making the final climb.

7 Crow Hill

Round trip: 4.0 miles

Elevation gain: 950 feet

High point: 7,366 feet

From one of the highest trailheads in the Central Cascades, set out on a delightful sky-walking, horizon-spanning, flower-lined frolic into the cloud-piercing Chelan Mountains. Rove lonely meadows and ridges once roamed by lonely sheepherders and their flocks. And views! Gaze from colonnades of craggy peaks for as far as the eye can see to the sparkling waters of Lake Chelan over one mile straight below. Do this hike in July and be treated to a floral riot.

8 Mad River Backpack

By Joan Burton

My friends Dave, Max, Gary and I took a backpack trip to the area before ORVs are allowed on the Fourth of July. On June 26th of a low-snow year we drove to Maverick Saddle, leaving the van before noon. We started along the small river on a partly sunny day, rejoicing because we had the trail all to ourselves, as we did for the entire three days.

We found excellent trail conditions with only one bridge out on the Upper Mad. At this season the stream was so low we had no problem fording it. We camped in Lower Whistling Pig Meadow and explored an old guard station in Upper Whistling Pig. Whistling Pig must, of course, have been named for its resident marmots.

The meadow is filled with flowers and is surrounded by old growth firs and pines. We could see ruts in the trail where last season's ORV use had dug deep grooves.

The second day we left our flowery camp early for a 10-mile loop trip to Mad Lake. A large and lovely alpine lake set in a meadow basin, the lake was filled with jumping fish and seemed only recently melted out. Banks of snow surrounded its deep waters.

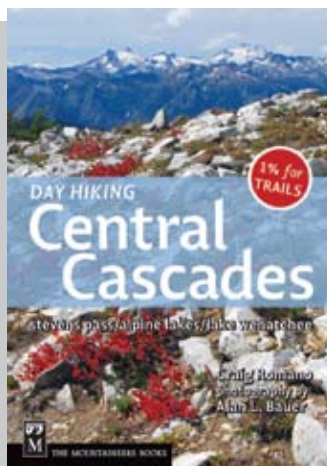
Back at the meadow that night we heard marmots whistling and saw deer silently browsing the alpine grasses at twilight. We wondered whether the animals could enjoy the same evening peace and quiet once the ORVs entered the area in a few days.

The hike out was sunny and pleasant. Although hunters and bikers use this area in summer and into the fall, backpackers should claim their turn to enjoy its beauty as well.

Joan Burton is author of Best Hikes with Kids: Western Washington and the Cascades.



You won't find ferns at Fern Lake, but you will find larches, granite spires and solitude. Photo by Craig Romano.



Craig Romano is the author of five guidebooks with the Mountaineers Books, including his latest with photographer Alan Bauer, *Day Hiking Central Cascades*; which includes 125 hikes in the Stevens Pass, Lake Wenatchee, and Alpine Lakes Regions, plus over a dozen Entiat destinations. Visit Craig at www.craigromano.com.

Saving the Entiat

WTA is working to protect a fragile landscape

by Karl Forsgaard

In March 2009, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest published maps of proposed changes in roads and trails open to motorized use. Reviewing the new maps inevitably brought reflection on how we got here, and where we're headed.

I began working on these trails in 1991 with the WTA Issues Committee. Expertise on the committee included authors Ira Spring and Harvey Manning. Our advocacy work took some personal time, but it's a worthy cause—I met new friends and learned about some great places to hike! That's how I was introduced to the wonderful Entiat and Mad River country.

In early 1992, WTA intervened in litigation to support the Forest Service's decision to close the North Fork Entiat River Trails to motorcycles. We wrote some powerful arguments that the federal courts adopted. The Ninth Circuit's North Entiat decision is still the leading case in the U.S. on use conflict between motorized and non-motorized users, and the North Fork Entiat Trail remains open to hikers, horses and mountain bikes.

With my sons I celebrated the North Entiat victory by hiking at Big Hill on the Pyramid Mountain Trail. I carried Nick on my back, and Anders toddled on foot. On open meadow ridges high above Lake Chelan, this trail has spectacular flower displays in July. As the boys grew bigger, we kept going back, sometimes with their mom too.

The Mad River country is between the Entiat River and the Chiwawa River. In 1993, WTA met with motorcyclists and Entiat District personnel about Three Creek and Shetipo, relatively parallel trails connecting the Entiat Valley with the upper Mad River. It was proposed that one trail be motorized and the other not. We didn't reach agreement then, but maybe we will soon—the proposal reappeared on the Forest's March 2009 maps.

More trail explorations followed the 1996 Goose-

Maverick motorcycle trail proposal. Above Maverick Saddle, the upper Mad River Trail follows the pristine river to its headwaters and beyond, through the forested subalpine plateau and many large meadows—Blue Creek, Whistling Pig, Mad Lake, and more. In early summer, there is a seasonal closure to motorcycles, to protect the wet soils immediately after snowmelt. So early-season hikers can experience natural quiet as flowers start to bloom before motorcycles arrive. As Dylan said, a highway of diamonds with nobody on it. Trails lead to the summits of Klone Peak and Cougar Mountain, and along Chikamin Ridge, with airy views down Three Creek valley. Bull trout, a threatened species, live in the Mad River.

Over the years I've met a lot of motorcyclists on the Mad River Trails. Although their machines are noisy, the local riding culture is polite. I've also worked alongside motorcycle advocates in meetings about projects, trail funding grant programs, and the biennial trail conferences hosted by the Washington State Trails Coalition.

WTA's successful advocacy also led to work outside Washington. Our informal national network became the Natural Trails and Waters Coalition, and we petitioned the Forest Service for the off-road vehicle (ORV) rule that is now being implemented as Travel Management.

For the latest lawsuit, we hiked many times along the lower Mad River, a different ecosystem than the upper Mad, but beautiful in its own way, with grassy slopes and scattered Ponderosa pines, some burned areas and more of those bull trout.

In these unprotected roadless areas, increased ORV use continues to displace hikers. Those who seek peace and quiet will be driven away by those who make noise, and it's never the other way around. ORVs also have negative impacts on wildlife, vegetation, soil and water. The Forest Service has said that the Entiat-Mad River roadless area is highly suitable for addition to the adjacent Glacier Peak Wilderness. ORV interests will oppose such protection, while seeking to entrench ORV use in as many places as possible.

The new proposed maps are on the Forest Service website, and you can submit comments until May 7. If you know any of these places and want them to stay wild, let the Forest Service hear about it. If you have not yet seen the Entiat, Chiwawa and Mad River country, make plans to visit!

Karl Forsgaard is a WTA advisory board member.

*Ponderosa pines on the
Lower Mad River Trail.*

Photo by Alan Bauer.



This full-color hiking guide and map was made possible by a grant from WTA's Stusser Endowment for Hiker News and Reports. Mapping by CORE-GIS.