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Expedition to Washington State: The Pacific Crest Trail, Mt. Rainier, Okanogan-Wenatchee, and Lake Chelan

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Abstract

Within the United States there are many different agencies that have been tasked with the management of America's Public Lands. Due to America's unique inception, there are many different ideas and concepts that affect how we view these same land units today. This poster delves into four specific land units in Washington State (The Pacific Crest National Trail, the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area, The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, and Mount Rainier National Park) to discuss each area's history and management issues, as well as discuss the effects of society's preconceived notions on each destination. Finally, the poster also discusses what ties these lands together - a planned 2-3 week trip that includes all the land units discussed.

Keywords

Lake Chelan Recreation Area, PCT, management issues, history, Okanogan-Wenatchee

Disciplines

Environmental Sciences | Land Use Law | United States History

Comments

This poster was created based on work completed for FYS 120: What Would Smokey Say?, and presented as a part of the eighth annual CAFE Symposium on February 8, 2023.

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Expedition to Washington State: The Pacific Crest Trail, Mt. Rainier, Okanogan-Wenatchee, and Lake Chelan

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Stop One: Lake Chelan National Recreation Area

Brief History

- Inhabited by Native Americans
 - Archaeological evidence as well as studies of the people in the area can determine a continual use of the site for at least 9,500 years
 - The lake also plays a significant role in some of their oral traditions
- The first recorded white settlers within the region are William Sanders and Henry Domke (1886)
 - Soon after, the area would see logging & mining
- Today, the area is mostly used for recreation, as a lot of the acreage is devoted to Wilderness Area
 - Only accessible by floatplane or boat

Management Issues

- The name "recreation area" implies a higher level of accessibility than available
- The final version of the General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) created in 1995 gives more insight into other management issues
 - Outlines the need for land protection and water quality preservation, while also focusing on outdoor tourism
- Task of promoting outdoor recreation in a lower accessibility area while still being concerned about the environmental impact of humans

Conceptual Ideas

1. Nature As Pristine
 - a. Wilderness areas and EIS/General Management Plan
2. Nature As Static

Logistical Trip Information

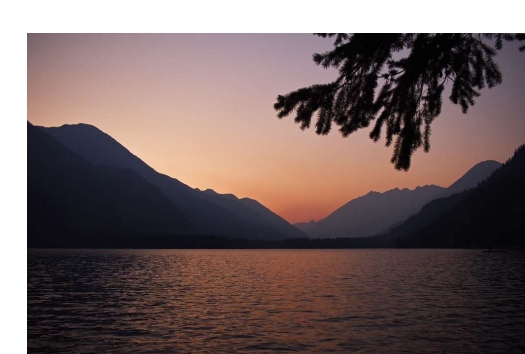
- Trip will begin by driving into Chelan, WA and taking a boat/plane to Stehekin
- We will make our way to the High Bridge campground, which lies just outside the Recreation Area's Borders
- The group will stay the night there, and then venture onto the PCT headed south



"Stehekin, Washington" by David Ansley is licensed under CC BY 1.0



"Lake Chelan NRA Sign" by Park Ranger is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0



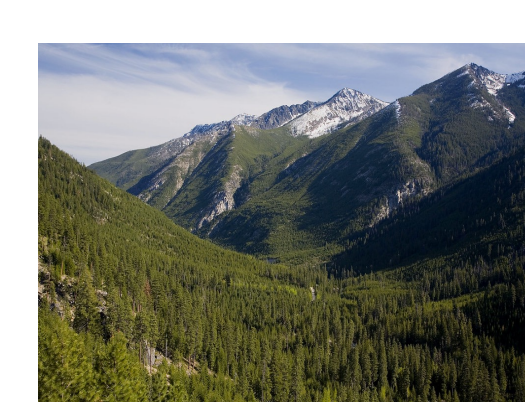
"Smokey Sunset over Lake Chelan" is licensed under Public Domain Mark 1.0



"View of Derby Canyon" by Forest Service PNW Region is licensed under Public Domain Mark 1.0



"View of Mount Rainier" by Forest Service PNW Region is licensed under Public Domain Mark 1.0

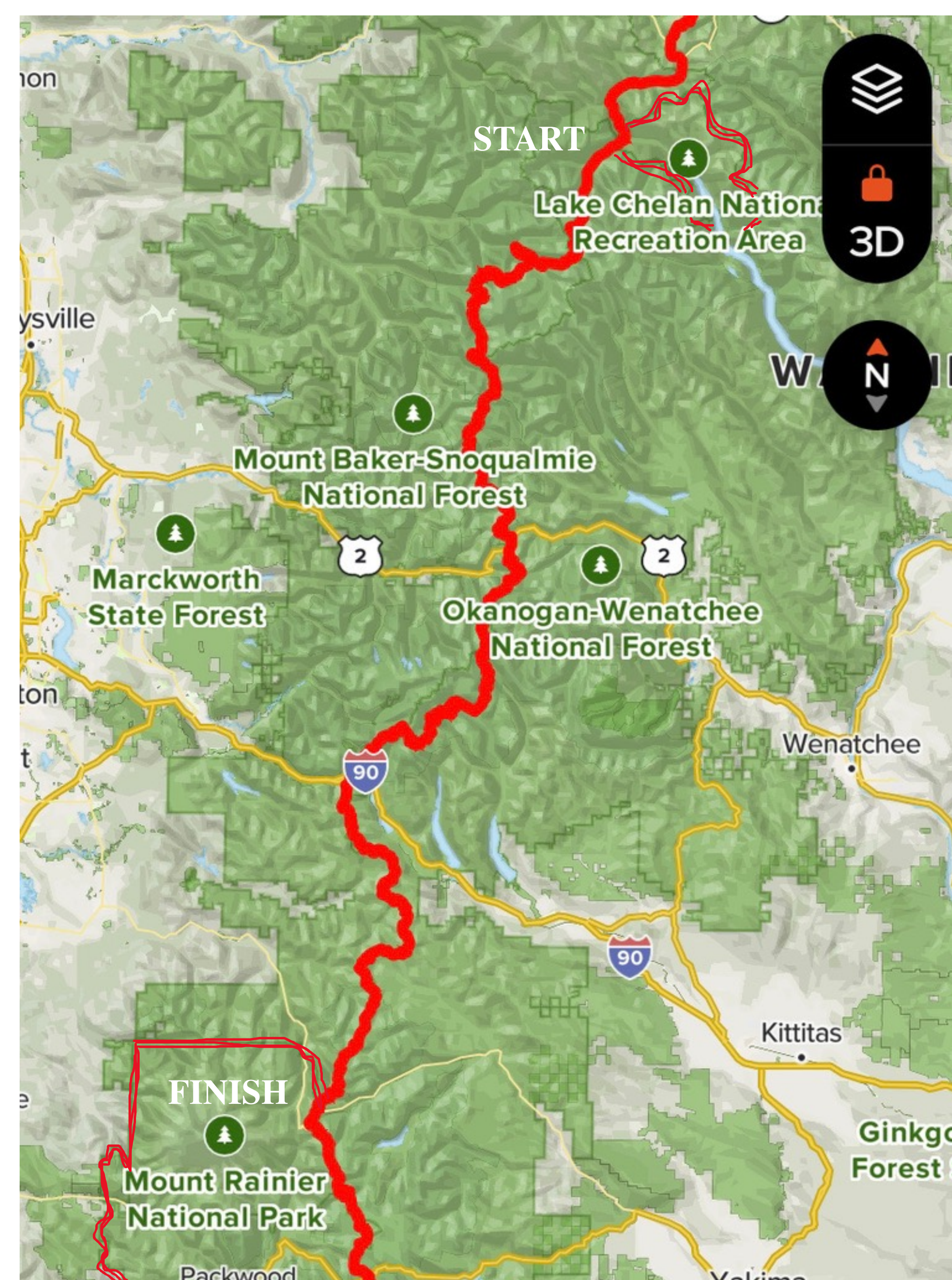


"Entiat & Tyee Ridge" by Forest Service PNW Region is licensed under Public Domain Mark 1.0

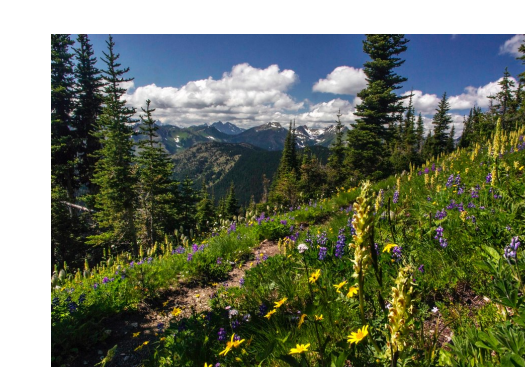
Introduction

When faced with the question of planning a trip to any of the United States' national public lands, there was no doubt in my mind that I would be going to a national trail and the Pacific Northwest. Washington and Oregon are places that have always greatly interested me, as I am an avid hiker and both states are known in the hiking community. It was difficult narrowing down where this trip would take place, but I decided to focus on the Pacific Crest Trail, Mt. Rainier National Park, the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, and the Lake Chelan Recreation Area.

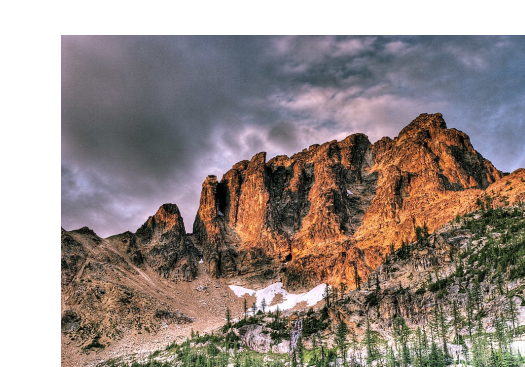
Not only do these places hold great beauty, but all lands discussed have unique management issues that stem both from their initial contradictory conceptions and from the "big conceptual ideas" that were fabricated into the nation's creation. For the duration of this project, I researched each location's history, management issues, and conceptual ideas, as well as planned a trip to these public lands of the United States.



Map of the Trip comes from the AllTrails app; AllTrails, Inc. (2010). AllTrails: Hike, Bike, & Run (16.4.0) [Mobile app]. Spectrum Equity. <https://www.alltrails.com>.



"Pacific Crest Trail on Lakeview Ridge, Pasayten Wilderness" by i8Seattle is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0



"Pacific Crest Trail, WA" by wildpianist is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



"Pacific Crest Trail, National Scenic Trail" by daveynin is licensed under CC BY 2.0



Photo courtesy of Austin Tieman

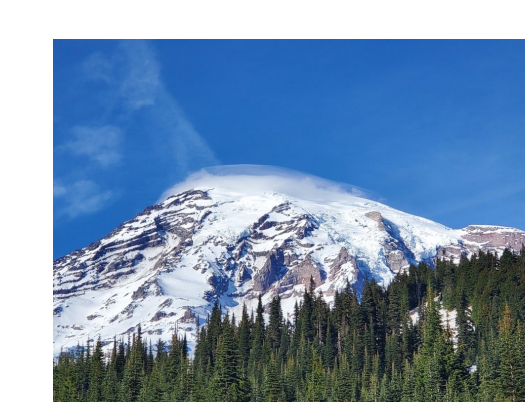


Photo courtesy of Austin Tieman

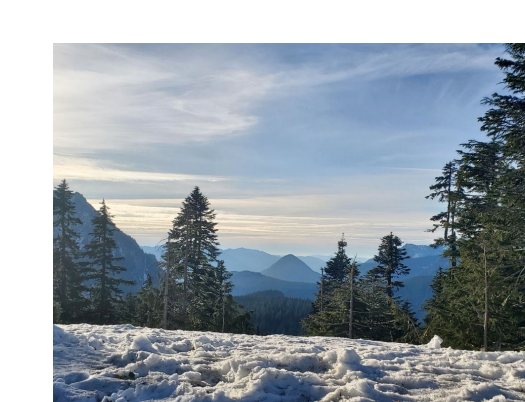


Photo courtesy of Austin Tieman

Stop Two: The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT)

Brief History

- First conceptualized in 1926, the trail is 2,650 miles long and extends from the California-Mexico border to the Washington-Canada Border
 - Trail was pieced together in sections; ex: 1920 = Oregon-Skyline Trail
- 1936-38 saw a series of relays of where YMCA and BSA boys mapped out a possible continuous trail using already created trails/roads
- One of the first National Scenic Trails with the National Trail System Act (1968)
- Managed by the US Forest Service with the PCT Association

Management Issues

- No "official" agency in charge of managing the National Trails of America
 - Congress designated management of the PCT to the US Forest Service
 - Management is broken into sections based on who already manages the land, each agency manages differently, which can lead to miscommunication
- The trail also runs through private property, which means easements must be made between agencies and landowners
- Climate change (flooding, wildfires, erosion)
- Can also be a great source of insight when trying to understand the management techniques of other agencies

Conceptual Ideas

1. Nature As Pristine
 - a. Climate change means nature is changing too
2. Nature As Static

Logistical Trip Information

- The PCT is the backbone of the trip; all travel revolves around this central trail
- Once on the PCT in Lake Chelan, it will take us through Okanogan-Wenatchee down to Mount Rainier and the Mather Memorial Parkway
- We will be acting as thru-hikers, carrying all our supplies and attempting a 12 miles/day pace. We should spend roughly 2 weeks on the PCT

Stop Three: Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

Brief History

- Originally 2 separate forests: Chelan and Wenatchee National Forests
 - Created before the Forest Organic Act, meaning no initial management plan
- Multiple Use Discipline utilized by the Forest Service meant grazing and logging
- Chelan National Forest changed names to the Okanogan National Forest
- In 2000, the two forests merged into one administrative unit

Management Issues

- Multiple use discipline
 - Outdoor recreation, grazing, timber/logging, watershed protection, and wildlife protection
- prioritizing preservation and maximization of resource development

Conceptual Ideas

1. Nature As Commodity
 - a. Multiple use discipline means getting the most benefit out of all resources
2. Nature As Pristine
 - a. Wilderness Areas within the Forest

Logistical Trip Information

- We will be hiking the majority of the PCT within the Okanogan-Wenatchee Forest
- The goal will be 12 miles a day, sleeping at campsites/pre-constructed shelters

Conclusion

This expedition to Washington State discusses several of the big conceptual ideas that have been associated with national public lands since the beginning of their creation. Both "land-as-commodity" and "land-as-pristine/static" have been discussed throughout each of the stops, outlining the residual effects of these preconceived notions. Looking at the PCT can help us identify different management approaches used by each agency. Additionally, by comparing lands such as Mount Rainier and Lake Chelan (both of which focus on tourism) it can be determined how accessibility and location affect different strategies of getting tourists to visit. As shown within the management issues for the PCT, climate related incidents are endangering the trail, and will most likely be affecting other lands as well. If actions are not taken to reverse the climate issues we are seeing on a global scale, then there might be consequences and effects that are seen throughout all these public lands.

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