

May 18, 1980 when living in Long Beach, Wa., I overheard shouting from the next fairway, "The mountain blew! The mountain blew!" I was unaware of the significance of this experience which only increased my awareness of Mt. St. Helens at the time.

In August 1982 I relocated from Long Beach, Wa. to Vancouver, Wa. This began my passion for exploring wild places in and around Mt. St. Helens. The winters of 1985-86 I spent X-C skiing around June Lake and Swift Creek. I do remember never having experienced such vast landscapes with rich resources of Douglas Firs and basalt outcroppings ever before. August 1986 remains memorable for I experienced summiting my very first mountain top and viewed into the crater of the erupted peak, even though I possessed no special equipment or mountaineer training. I imagined I was walking on the craters of the moon at the time while traversing the Plains of Abraham. Once acclimated, I was totally enthralled by the stark beauty of Mt. Adams, Mt. Hood., and Mt. Rainier while sitting on the top of the world.

After moving to Battle Ground, Wa in 1987, I noted a plethora of ash on our rooftop after a reroofing job. I hauled my two daughters, ages 6 and 8, up to the Ape Caves in 1998, another first experience for me in spelunking. I recalled the exuberance on my youngest daughter's face when she was able to squeeze into the final portal at the end of the lava tube. Completely occupying the small void, I quickly departed the tiny space.

I have led the Cascade Volcano Chapter of the Great Old Broads for Wilderness (GPBW) since July 2017, after joining in 2009. *A national non-profit grassroots organization, headquartered in Durango, Colorado, the GOBW engages and inspires activism to preserve and protect wilderness and wild lands. Founded in 1989, GOBW is one of the few public land conservation organizations led by women. With more than 8,500 members and supporters across the nation, GOBW emphasizes local grassroots action. The Cascade Volcanoes Broadband is a grassroots chapter located in Southwest Washington-Northwest Oregon. As a women-led organization, GOBW brings knowledge, leadership, and humor to the conservation movement to protect our last wild places on earth. GOBW empowers women to use democracy to defend our birthright—America's public lands and waters – through education, advocacy, stewardship, and fun. It was created, in part, to protect the interests of senior populations who value roadless areas, enjoy them without mechanized means of transportation, and want to see these places protected in their natural state in perpetuity.*

*GOBs believe that wild places are valuable in their own right. We also respect the spirit and intent of national conservation legislation such as the*

*National Environmental Policy Act, and we support sound science as a basis for policy decision making.*

*My role as a leader of the Cascade Volcanoes Broadband included organizing chapter meetings, securing speakers, developing partnerships with like-minded groups, writing activity reports, leading advocacy events, grant writing, and leading stewardship events and hikes.*

My leadership position with the GOBW has presented many opportunities for me to explore, protect, and steward in and around Mt. St. Helens, and the recreational and stewardship possibilities in this region remain immense. In August 2018 we conducted beaver habitat surveys to assess potential release sites with Cascade Forest Conservancy. Hiking the Hummocks trail in 2018 introduced me to new geological landscapes which resembled the mole hills in my backyard. A side trip to the Mt. St. Helens National Monument offered our group a half day of education about the eruption and aftermath of the changing ecosystems. Kayaking outings to Merrill Lake and Coldwater Lake provided me opportunities for discovering solitude in Cowlitz County. Trail of Two Forests....

I organized a campout in August 2019 at Iron Creek Campground where we hiked to Covel Falls, Angel Falls, and Layser Cave. Covel Falls was especially noteworthy since we experienced hiking the trail from behind the falls. Our chapter has also discovered the Ape Canyon Trail in October 2019, as well as the Siouxon Creek trails. Following the opening of the Merrill Lake DNR Lands I have led outings exploring the Kalama River Falls as well as the DNR trails on this parcel in 2020 on several occasions. I also guided a small backpacking trip for women on the Toutle Trail along the Kalama River in August 2020. Snowshoeing the June Lake area in January 2020 offered a vastly different perspective from the fall landscape of this region. I continue to regularly enjoy recreation on the Merrell Lake DNR lands today due to its proximate location to my home.

Some of my memories of winter recreating over the years on the Mt. St. Helens ski trails involved experiencing more accumulation of snowpack than I have witnessed in recent winters. In 1986 we were rewarded with plenty of snow in which to traverse Swift Creek while XC skiing; however, my experiences in recent years involved no skiing access over Swift Creek due to reduced snowpack as a result of a changing climate, and, consequently, snowshoeing has been our only winter recreational choice. This pattern is expected to continue to impact recreational opportunities in the region in the future.

My passion for Mt. St Helens is genuine and enduring. While I have submitted scoping comments to the Forest Service in opposition to the proposed project, I also comprehend the public safety concerns regarding Spirit Lake and the inherent potential for catastrophic flooding to downstream communities. The Mt. St. Helens parcel is a unique region, and scientists have been researching how an ecosystem recovers from a disaster such as the eruption of 1980. We have a unique opportunity to gain invaluable knowledge from this

research to benefit other areas impacted by future natural disasters. The development of a road in this area would destroy data on which the research is based, and which could never be recovered if the road were to be built. Roadless areas create wildlife habitat and connectivity which cannot be replicated after a road is built. The noise, chemicals, and habitat loss due to the road building would also disrupt wildlife migration and nesting. The thought of hiking along the Pumice Plain on a gravel road built for supplying materials to support infrastructure on Spirit Lake to replace the Truman Trail would be a huge disappointment and impact the aesthetic value of the hike.

The Great Old Broads for Wilderness supports the Forest Service in its concern for public safety if the scientific and ecologic integrity is maintained. Comments have been submitted on behalf of the GOBW during the scoping period. We are requesting a more thorough assessment of the environmental impacts of the project as well as an evaluation of alternatives to the proposal. These concerns are shared with scientists and other environmental groups.

I have experienced and continue to explore the boundless wild places in the Mt. St. Helens area. I hope to share these wild places with others in perpetuity, as well as maintain my stewardship activities with GOBW and partner groups to preserve and protect the region. My members of GOBW share my concerns about the project.

A road that crosses the Pumice Plain would be devastating for hikers and scientists. We urge the Forest Service to reconsider their options and offer a less ecologically destructive plan for resolving the Spirit Lake Tunnel Gate problem.