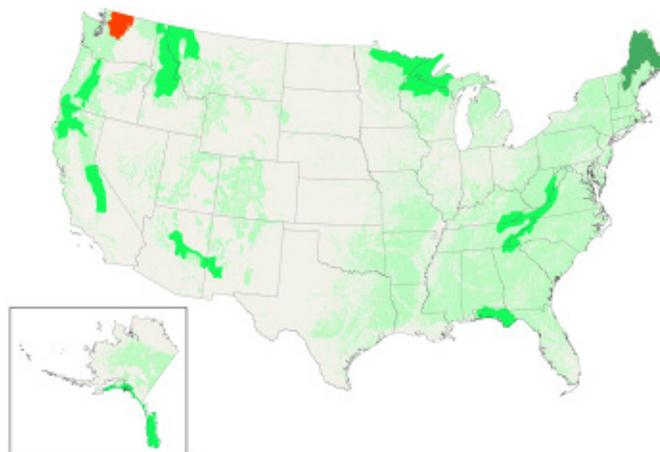


# KEYSTONE FOREST



## Physical Description

The North Cascades Keystone Forest, ranging from Interstate 90 in Washington north to the Canadian border, is among the wildest places in America. During the months when the North Cascades Highway (SR 20) is under snow, the area features the largest contiguous expanse of roadless land left in the lower 48 states. This keystone forest stretches between the Puget lowland and the Cascade Mountains leeward forest ecoregions.

Forests of Douglas fir, Western hemlock and Western red cedar domi-

nate the Western slopes. The Eastern slopes vary from Douglas fir to Ponderosa pine to lodgepole pine. The valleys start as low as almost sea level and are often separated by high and rugged ridges that reach to stunning peaks, the highest of which is volcanic Mount Baker at more than 10,000 feet. In this remote expanse, low populations of grizzly bear, wolverine, lynx and cougar are still found and the occasional wolf. The usual list of Northwest forest-dependent species also live here, from the Northern spotted owl to Pacific giant salamander,

pine marten and a few lonely Pacific fisher. Runs of Pacific salmon, steelhead and bull trout vary in health.

The North Cascades is heavily used for recreation by both the urban population around Seattle and the surrounding rural communities. Hunting, fishing, hiking, birding, rafting, rock/mountain climbing, backcountry skiing and horsepacking are all common.

## Threats

The North Cascades is presently one of the best protected ecosystems in the country, but Bush administration policies related to the logging of dry forests as well as the ongoing rollbacks of Northwest Forest Plan provisions, pose serious threats. There are also significant problems with overgrazing in some areas, excessive recreational use and growing impacts associated with population growth in valleys like the

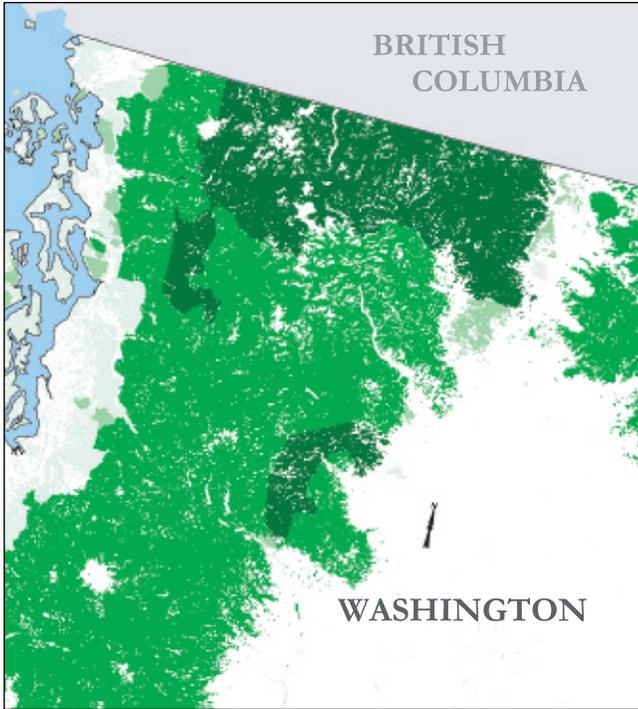
**Mount Shuksan is reflected in Picture Lake in the North Cascades National Park, Washington.**



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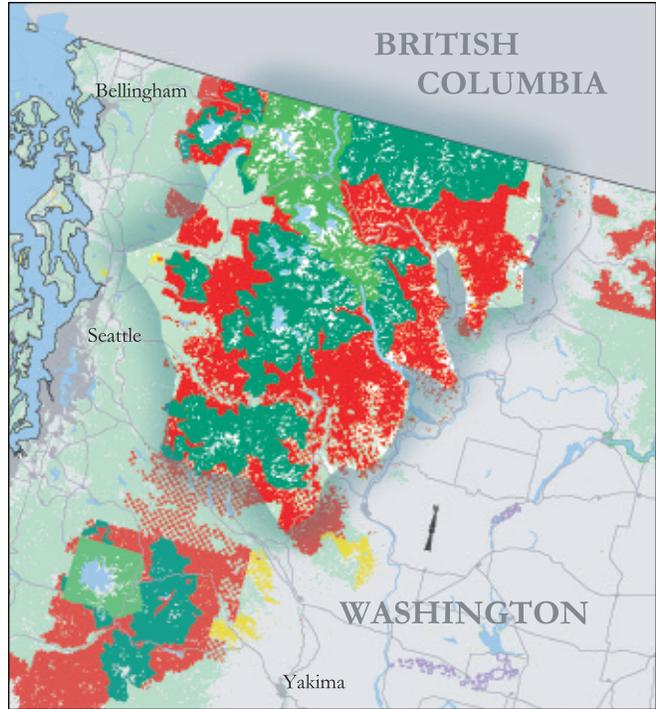
Forested BLM Lands (non-wilderness)	6,773
Forested National Forest Lands (non-wilderness)	2,082,560
Forested National Wildlife Refuge Lands (non-wilderness)	576
Forested National Park Lands (non-wilderness)*	484,360
Forested Wilderness	1,586,887
Forested miscellaneous public and private preserves	6,341
Privately owned, unprotected forest lands	795,786
<b>Total Forested Lands</b>	<b>4,963,283</b>

\*Available data did not necessarily distinguish wilderness from non-wilderness within national parks, so some wilderness within national parks may be included within this statistic.



**Forest Quality**

- Moderate
- Good
- Best



**Forest Ownership**

- Forested BLM and national forest lands
- Forested national parks
- Forested wilderness areas
- Forested national wildlife refuges
- Misc. forested public lands and private preserves
- Privately owned forests
- Wilderness area boundaries
- National park boundaries
- National wildlife refuge boundaries
- Urban areas
- Highways

Methow and Skagit.

**Efforts to Increase Protected Areas**

The Wild Sky Wilderness Act would permanently protect more than 100,000 acres as a Wild Sky Wilderness Area of wildland in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. This act has passed the Senate twice, but is stalled in the House. Citizen proposals also exist for additional wilderness around Mount Baker and other areas.

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