

# Mountaineer

EXPLORE • LEARN • CONSERVE

*In this issue:*

Stewarding Waterways From Source to Sea

The Power of Giving Back

Field Notes From the Frontcountry





Summer 2025 | Volume 119 | Number 3

The Mountaineers enriches the community by helping people explore, conserve, learn about, and enjoy the lands and waters of the Pacific Northwest and beyond.



On the cover: Zua Stivers and Jill Young, happily celebrating another campsite ready for summer guests, at a Mountaineers cleanup of Hamma Hamma/Lena Creek Campground. Photo by Ginger Sarver.

Mountaineer uses:



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Top: Manisha and friends at the 2025 Adventure with Purpose Gala. Photo courtesy of FunShots Photo Booth. Headshot courtesy of Manisha Powar.

In April, I had the honor of hosting a table at The Mountaineers Gala, a night dedicated to celebrating our shared love for the outdoors and the people who make this community what it is. My entire table was filled with women who have shaped my Mountaineers journey in ways I'll never forget. These mentors patiently taught me all the skills that make my adventures possible, like how to place trad gear, route-find, and travel safely in the backcountry. Throughout my journey as a student, they shared their knowledge freely, gave up weekends to teach courses, and offered encouragement when I felt out of place or overwhelmed. I came into this community without much experience, and they made it feel like home.

To me, that is the essence of stewardship: the quiet, consistent act of giving, whether it be time, skills, or a belief in others. Mountaineers do this every day – our mentors, instructors, trip leaders, advocates, and volunteers make room for new people, hold

space for learning, and ensure the outdoors remains welcoming and accessible for all. We build bridges, protect the places we love, and share our knowledge so that people of all experiences can feel physically and emotionally safe in the natural world.

There are many ways to give back to the people and places that nourish us. Giving back starts with a shared rope, a trail lunch, a carpool, or even just a kind word. It's how we grow not just as outdoor enthusiasts, but as a community.

To those who've mentored, led, taught, and made space for others – thank you. And to those just finding your place here – I hope you'll feel inspired to one day give back in a way that makes this community feel like home for others.

Learn more about the ways The Mountaineers gives back, and hear updates from leadership on the progress we're making toward our mission and vision by attending our virtual State of the Organization event on June 10, 2025: [mountaineers.org/state-of-the-org-June-2025](https://mountaineers.org/state-of-the-org-June-2025).

Manisha P

Manisha Powar  
Board President



The Mountaineers is a nonprofit organization, founded in 1906 and dedicated to the responsible enjoyment and protection of natural areas.

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Mountaineers clearing downed trees on the Wynoochee Lakeshore Trail. Photo by Ginger Sarver.



Skye Michel  
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Photo by Karen Grubb.

One of my most memorable trail experiences is the time I spent six hours trying to move a rock. I was in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest with a group of stewards to help maintain a portion of Denny Creek Trail. My group was tasked with digging up rocks to create steps that would mitigate a section of uneven ground. This being my first trail work party, I anticipated leaving the afternoon with at least a few dozen feet

of refurbished trail under my belt and photos of prime stepping stones to show off to friends. But a four-foot by five-foot rock lodged beneath the soil had other plans.

After an hour, and then four, of digging, I learned that some rocks are kind of like icebergs - most of their mass exists beneath the surface. Using a shovel, sometimes a rock bar, and often just my hands, I investigated the area of trail in search of the rock's contours. Just when I thought our group had uncovered enough of the rock's edge to leverage it out, my shovel would clang against another area buried imperceptibly deep in the soil.

We wrestled with this rock the entire day, and only moments after our trail crew leader announced the end of the workday did my group finally (and with a relieved cheer) leverage the rock free. The next day, our iceberg rock was moved by other stewards to create a level step.

It took seven hours (and more, considering the work of the following day's trail crew) to accomplish what would take hikers only a fraction of a second to walk through. But despite the short distance we covered, I felt proud to be part of the effort to make a hiking experience safer and more accessible for others. And not only that - I had a darn good time getting my hands dirty alongside other outdoor enthusiasts who were stoked to give back to the places they love.

While unearthing that boulder felt rewarding, my biggest takeaways were witnessing the enthusiasm of other participants and experiencing firsthand the motivating ethos behind stewardship: when you appreciate something, you care for it - not because you have to, but because you want to. And usually, you end up working alongside incredible people who make even the most arduous task feel like a delight.

This ethos is embedded within The Mountaineers, and the stories in this edition highlight the various ways our community is committed to giving back. Whether it be giving our time to steward beloved waterways, giving our knowledge to improve collective risk-management, giving our dollars to fund transformative outdoor experiences, or giving our voice to defend public lands... giving back is at the heart of what we do. During a time when a lot of what we love is under threat, I feel grateful to be part of a community that is meeting the moment with an unwavering dedication to giving back in myriad ways to protect and preserve the people and places we love.

*Skye Michel*





*Our spring 2025 edition celebrated the various ways the natural world inspires and supports our adventures through all stages of life, with a cover that featured the empowering and joyful ways we can show up to the mountains. Readers responded to the edition with enthusiasm.*

"WOW! I used to work for

American Alpine Institute... and I remember how the women mountain climbing guides would paint their toenails just for fun, before climbing a summit or really get gussied up... just to contrast the dirt-bag climbing attire when on the trail. So this cover made me smile and think of all those strong women... and a new generation of just such AMAZING gals who can straddle both worlds - the rugged peak and the 'girls just wanna have fun' dress up attire."

-Jennifer Hahn, author of *Pacific Harvest*

*Mountaineers volunteers attending Leavenworth's recent Rockfest also received positive feedback from young recreationists who were excited by last edition's cover.*



"[The girls] stopped by our booth asking for freebies and saw our magazine with the powerhouse women on the front cover. They were inspired and asked if they could be on the cover. I said maybe and then proceeded to ask what cool thing they did this morning. The girl in the middle responded 'we just are cool'... the perfect response. Their favorite activities to do together are rock climbing and skiing and they inspired me."

-Sarah MacGillivray, 3-year member

*Last edition, we shared a piece with tips and tricks on how to manage menstruation in the backcountry, as well as advice for outdoor leaders on how to incorporate menstruation management into trip planning. People who menstruate, and those who don't, welcomed the opportunity to read more about this under-discussed topic.*

"I just want to thank The Mountaineers for this piece. I think acknowledging the challenges of menstruating outdoors is an important conversation to have for those of us who deal with it. I appreciate the topic being handled in a manner that is inclusive of anyone who menstruates, regardless of gender identity."

- Katrina Schonberg-Hamar, *Mountaineer* reader

"I haven't been as uncomfortable with a Mountaineers activity since I attended a talk a woman friend gave on using funnels and pee bottles while in a tent. She was frank and used humor with the group. I sat in the back. But then I knew what to expect when climbing and camping with women. This article is in that same vein. Maybe uncomfortable for some but definitely good to be aware. Keep it up *Mountaineer*!"

- Chris Richards, 35-year member

"This is great! Especially important as [federal funding] cuts mean less and less amenities in the backcountry. We gotta be prepared to pack out *all* of our waste and I hope people feel empowered reading this when it comes to menstruating on trips!"

- Meghan Young, *Mountaineer* reader

Interested in writing for *Mountaineer* magazine? We'd love to hear your story! Email us at [magazine@mountaineers.org](mailto:magazine@mountaineers.org).

## ONCE IN A LIFETIME ADVENTURES



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# LAST SEASON'S TOP TRIP REPORT PHOTOS



Day hike, Squak Mountain Forest Rim,  
Roseanne Lorenzana.



Seattle Basic Alpine SIG Field Trip,  
Vantage, Matt Davey.



Cross-country ski, Echo Ridge, Brian Collins.



Day Hike, Licorice Fern Trail & Far Country Falls,  
Barbara Folmer.



Day Hike, Ruston Waterfront Trail,  
Steven Payne.



Packrafting, Green River, Logan Degrand.



Packrafting, Winchester Wasteway,  
Max McDermott.



Intermediate Alpine Climb, Copper  
Mountain, Iron Mountain, & Pyramid  
Peak, Rodica Manole.



Basic Alpine Climb, South Early Winter Spire via  
Southwest Couloir, Robert McCadden.



Navigation Practice, Raging River State  
Forest, Courtenay Schurman.



Naturalist Trip, Ginkgo Petrified Forest,  
Thomas Bancroft.



Intermediate Alpine Climb, Mount Hood via  
Leuthold Couloir, Isley Gao.





**Name** Dan Renfrow

**Hometown** Seattle. I spent most of my childhood roaming the second-growth forests of Mukilteo which no longer exist

**Member Since** 2001

**Favorite Activities** Trail running and trail work

Above: Erin Shannon-Starup and Dan "climbing" Mt. Baker during last year's Trail Running Weekend. Photo by Deline Zent. Top right: Dan with a crosscut saw during a Mountaineers stewardship activity at Three Fingers via Meadow Mt. Trail. Photo by Craig Kohring.



#### Why do you like getting outside with us?

I gravitate toward activities and groups with a strong sense of purpose and community. I like that one week I can be reinforcing or learning a new skill from another member, and then next week, I'm showing them something they didn't know.

#### What's your favorite Mountaineers memory?

In 2024, we had just finished trail running a very beautiful, two-day point-to-point in the North Cascades as the finale of the Fastpacking course. Everyone was stoked by the scenery and experience and despite being tired, everyone was excited to start planning the next trip together. It was wonderful to share a new approach for going deeper into the backcountry of a national park The Mountaineers helped put on the map.

#### Who/What inspires you?

The volunteer instructors and leaders who repeatedly donate their own time to plan, coordinate, and execute trips with The Mountaineers. Always thank your trip leaders! Coordinating is more work than you think.

#### What does adventure mean to you?

I don't think you can have true adventure without some sort of struggle or unknown obstacles that you have to deal with. Ever notice that no bestsellers have been written about a trip that goes completely according to plan? Being put in a situation where you need to use your learned skills or problem solve can be the most rewarding trip. ▲▲

#### What first brought you to The Mountaineers?

I was looking to meet people who actually wanted to go outside - by choice! I was first drawn to hiking and backpacking, but I became much more involved after discovering the Foothills Trail Running Committee, then naturally combined the two to create the Intro to Fastpacking course.

Since joining, I've also become involved as a stewardship leader. My partner Erin Shannon-Starup and I have spent the last few years rebuilding the Everett Branch's Lookout and Trail Maintenance Committee. I also recently helped The Mountaineers create an online course on how to become a stewardship leader to make it easier for our members to give back to the lands that make our programs possible.

### Lightning round

**Sunset or sunrise?** Sunrise

**What's your 11<sup>th</sup> Essential?** A friend to share your experience

**What's your happy place?** The North Cascades

**Post-adventure meal of choice?** Coffee

**If you could be a rockstar at any outdoor activity overnight, what would it be?** Climbing



# Using Imagery and Embodied Cognition to Enhance Performance

By Mercedes Pollmeier, MS, CSCS

A Mountaineers Adventure Club (MAC) student climbing at Vantage. Photo courtesy of MAC.

**A**s a former competitive tennis player and climber, I learned early on that being mentally prepared for an event is just as important as being physically prepared. When I showed up to a competition unfocused or unconfident, it reflected in my results. But when I was mentally in the zone, my performance followed suit.

As I transitioned to coaching, helping athletes prepare through mental imagery and embodied cognition was key.

## What is imagery?

Imagery – also known as visualization – involves mentally rehearsing your performance without the physical component, and focusing on your desired outcome. This is an especially great tool for athletes with limited practice time, as it allows them to supplement some physical practice with mental rehearsal and memorization.

Research shows that the practice of imagery activates the same areas of the brain as performing the action itself, making this technique an effective way to "prime" the body for the task ahead. For example, a climber working on a project might visualize every detail of the climb – from the handholds to the sequence of movements. Mentally rehearsing these details boosts the climber's concentration, confidence, and execution during the actual effort.

Whether you're preparing for a technical hike, ice climb, climbing project, or kayaking route, imagery training will help you mentally prepare to physically succeed.

## What is embodied cognition?

Embodied cognition is the idea that our cognition – our thoughts, perceptions, and actions – is shaped by our physical, bodily experiences. In simple terms: the brain and body work together to inform decision-making and performance.

Embodied cognition is useful for people who perform outdoor activities and can enhance imagery by introducing movement into visualization. For instance, when preparing to cross challenging terrain, a hiker might "walk through" it in their mind while physically mimicking the motions of walking. Or, a climber preparing for a route might mentally rehearse the climb while also feeling the emotions, tactile sensations, and energy that would accompany the actual experience. Personally, I find that combining embodied cognition with imagery makes up about 80% of my prep work for tackling a new project.

## How to use imagery and embodied cognition as an outdoor enthusiast

Imagery and embodied cognition aren't just for elite athletes – they're tools anyone can use to improve confidence and performance. To incorporate these techniques into your training, here are some tips:

**Gather information.** The more you know about your endeavor, the better. Gather details about your task, such as elevation, terrain, temperature, and route difficulty. (For climbing, this might include the hold types, rock type, and steepness.)





Top to bottom: Mountaineers practicing paddling techniques. Photo by Cathie Frizalone. Climbing at Vantage. Photo by Mountaineers Explorers. Scrambling near Mount Baker. Photo by Skye Michel.

**Visualize the environment.** Once you've gathered the details, sit or lie down and begin visualizing the route or terrain. Run through the process in your head, from start to finish.

**Break it down.** Parse your project into steps and visualize each step to memorize the sequence. Think about the order of the movements you'll make. Watch yourself move through these steps from a third-person perspective.

**Integrate first-person visualization.** Shift your visualization to first-person, imagining yourself in your own body, moving through the sequence. At this point, it might be helpful to incorporate an embodied cognition practice by moving your arms and legs as you imagine yourself performing the action. (If you'd like a great climbing example of this, look up Adam Ondra preparing for the route Silence.)

**Add sensory details.** Once the sequence feels dialed, integrate sensory information to help you become more in tune with the physical sensations you'll experience. Sensory details might include: the texture of the rock, the sound of the water, the temperature of your surroundings, the color of the vegetation, the smell of the air, and even the rhythm of your heartbeat.

**Visualize yourself succeeding.** This is the most important part of imagery. Focusing on failure or imagining struggle only increases anxiety and diminishes your confidence. If you don't see yourself achieving the goal, you miss out on the full benefit of imagery.

## Deepening the mind-body connection for more successful outcomes

Imagery and embodied cognition aren't just abstract concepts – they're practical tools that can significantly enhance your performance outdoors. By tapping into your mental rehearsal and enhancing physical awareness, you can better prepare your body and mind for challenge.

At first, your imagery practice might feel awkward, unfocused, or frustrating. Your palms might sweat, and the mental pictures may not align with reality. This is completely normal. Getting familiar with imagery is part of the process, and with practice, visualization will become clearer and more effective. Even small amounts of imagery practice can have an impact, making you feel more in control and empowered.

As you transition from mental rehearsal to real-life action, let go of any expectations. Stay present, trust your abilities, and allow the preparation to guide you rather than control you.

Remember, the mental game is just as important as the physical. Whether you're a competitive athlete or a recreational enthusiast, imagery gives you the chance to practice, gain control, and move forward with confidence. By regularly using these tools, you'll not only improve your technical skills, but develop a deeper connection between mind and body, leading to more enjoyable and successful outdoor adventures. ▲▲

*Mercedes Pollmeier is an NSCA-certified strength and conditioning specialist based in Seattle, with degrees in exercise science and human movement, and is a Precision Nutrition L2 Master Coach. Currently, she owns her own climbing coaching company, Modus Athletica, training climbers in person and online. Visit her online at [modusathletica.com](http://modusathletica.com) and on Instagram @modusathletica.*



# Crisis on Mount Hood

## Stories from a Hundred Years of Mountain Rescue

By Christopher Van Tilburg



Christopher Van Tilburg on an andesite cliff near Cloud Cap Inn. Photo by Corey Arnold.

**T**he Hood River Crag Rats, America's oldest all-volunteer search and rescue team, is situated in the foothills of North America's most-climbed glaciated peak: Mount Hood. Author and emergency room doctor Christopher Val Tilburg recounts many of the highs and lows of the Crag Rats' hundred-year history in his new book *Crisis on Mount Hood*. As climate change and overcrowding alter the shape of mountain rescue, the Crag Rats remain unwaveringly dedicated to keeping adventurers safe.

Enjoy a sample of what *Crisis on Mount Hood* has to offer.

In Eagle Creek, the single most common trail for rescues, if we don't go after someone with a sprained ankle or knee, it's more often an injury from a cliff jumper at Punch Bowl or someone lost on Benson Plateau. We've also hauled out a woman actively seizing with new-onset epilepsy and another with hypothermia and hypoglycemia for new-onset insulinoma, a benign pancreatic

tumor that causes too much insulin to be released and thus drops blood sugar to a critical nadir. Today, though, the call is for wildfire rescue. Apparently, a fire has moved to a point just a mile from the parking lot, choking off the trail near the first set of cables. Several scores of people—an exact number is not possible, but it might be as many as 160—are trapped at Punch Bowl Falls, many wearing flip-flops, T-shirts, and shorts or swimwear.

My first thought: Let's get a crew.

My second thought: We're not prepared for fire.

My third thought: If the one mile downhill hike to their car is blocked by fire, they'll all need to walk thirteen miles uphill to Wahtum Lake, where they can be picked up via a dilapidated, potholed road that leads down to Hood River.

The hikers are instructed to head uphill, away from the fire. As darkness nears, a sole Forest Service ranger runs down the trail from Wahtum Lake, finds the group,



Crag Rats, along with Pacific Northwest SAR and Cascade Locks Fire/EMS, complete a difficult extraction from a remote trail in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Photo courtesy of Hood River Crag Rats Collection.





Crag Rats circa the 1950s use an akja to evacuate an injured patient from Mount Hood's north side. Photo courtesy of Hood River Crag Rats Collection.

and shepherds them to a flat spot near Tunnel Falls, where they hunker in for the night. The youngest is three, the oldest a septuagenarian.

It's still the middle of the night, so they distribute snacks and water and wait for morning. John Rust has the brilliant idea of writing a number on each person's hand with a marker to keep track of them all. At dawn, they begin the long hike out to Wahtum Lake, seven miles from the makeshift camp. At the top, the rescued hikers are loaded onto buses for the ride back to their cars. By early afternoon, all are safe. "Mission complete. Stand down. Not one death or major injury."

At a debrief weeks later, Wes sounds calm and deliberate about the hike down the trail to Tunnel Falls, into the fire. "I was scared. We could hear the fire crackling and see the flames just a few hundred yards away." I don't tell him, but at that moment I have a great awe and respect for him just getting the mission completed.

Two days after the rescue, the fire will travel west to within a few miles of Portland, grow to over thirty thousand acres, and start spot fires across the Columbia River in Washington. In the following week, one thousand personnel, a dozen aircraft, and at least a gross of vehicles will battle the blaze. It will burn full-on for three weeks, smolder for months, and pop up a year later from a subterranean smoldering stump.

The Eagle Creek Fire was not a routine mission for the Crag Rats. But then, nothing has ever been "routine" for us. Consider that in our history we've had a broad range of volunteer duties beyond the alpine: assisting the US Forest Service to fight wildland fires in the 1920s; helping the sheriff with law enforcement and lifeguarding in the 1950s; and up until the late 1980s, helping the Soil and Water Conservation District with snow surveys. Basically, if someone asks us for help, we're likely to assist.

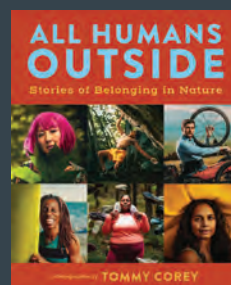
Christopher Van Tilburg will be in conversation with Lowell Skoog at the Seattle Program Center on June 17 at 6:30pm. Tickets start at \$12. For more details, visit [mountaineers.org/books/authors/events](http://mountaineers.org/books/authors/events).



## A Rockhound's Guide to Oregon & Washington

By Alison Jean Cole

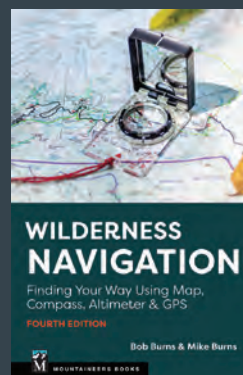
The Pacific Northwest is a geologic gem with ancient sea-floors, lava flows, glacial landscapes, more than 200 million years of tectonic action – and all the rocks that come with it. In *A Rockhound's Guide to Oregon & Washington*, author and guide Alison Jean Cole takes us through the geologic history of 60 rockhounding sites in Oregon and Washington, teaching us where to ethically source agates, jaspers, fossils, and more while exploring some of our region's least-populated places.



## All Humans Outside: Stories of Belonging in Nature

By Tommy Corey

Author Tommy Corey traveled across the United States for the better part of a year to capture the many ways being outside can change a person, and how we shape the outdoors in return. Through intimate photography and interviews, Corey's debut book *All Humans Outside* explores 101 stories of individuals and their complex personal relationships to the natural world. From equestrians to hikers, runners, surfers, and more, *All Humans Outside* revels in the diversity and inspiration that can be found in every corner of the outdoor industry.



## Wilderness Navigation, 4th Edition

By Bob Burns and Mike Burns

*Wilderness Navigation* has long been a foundational text in outdoor courses across the country, and this new fourth edition continues to provide an excellent manual on the essential tools and proven techniques of top-notch navigators, while also incorporating the latest innovations in navigation technology and trends. New material details how to use GPS and other satellite-based navigational products, updates the types and availability of topographical maps, and notes changes in magnetic declination.



# The Circle of Mentorship

## MAC Alumni Becoming Tomorrow's Leaders

By Alvaro Juarez, Seattle Programs Manager



The outgoing Mountaineers Adventure Club (MAC) leadership team welcoming the new MAC leadership team. From left to right: Sawyer, Caroline, Isobel, Simon, Iris, Kal, Sam, Paul, Quisha, Lily. All photos courtesy of MAC unless otherwise noted.

**W**hen I started out in the bicycle industry, I was full of enthusiasm, excitement, and passion. With my head in the clouds and my heart with the stars, I didn't know where my feet were supposed to be planted. I needed a mentor - someone who could redirect my tractor beam aspirations into a plan with a focused goal, process, and outcome.

After nearly five years of evolving from shop apprentice to skilled mechanic and program manager, helping all walks of life with their bikes, I found myself transitioning into an instructor, then mentor, at the bike shop. I was teaching people skills that once seemed like rocket science, but now felt like second nature. This transformation from novice to confident leader was made possible thanks to former colleagues whose patience and guidance shaped my development. Because of them, I have a deep passion for passing along skills to others.

### Cultivating leadership through MAC

Experiences like mine are common among students beginning their first year with The Mountaineers Adventure Club (MAC), a year-round program designed to get teens outside. Newcomers enter the program with an ambitious list of goals, in search of experience and mentorship that can help them

get there. This is where The Mountaineers ethos of learning and giving back comes into play.

In a typical adult Mountaineers program, participants sign up for a course because they want to learn new skills. The hope is that after completing the course, graduates feel inspired by the experience of learning from volunteer instructors and return as leaders themselves to share their skills with the next generation of students.

MAC operates in a similar way, except that in addition to learning from adult volunteer instructors, MAC students have the opportunity to learn from their own peers: previous MAC students who are eager to empower younger students and give back to a program that taught them so much. And, once a student has graduated from MAC, they are encouraged to return as a youth instructor and help subsequent students achieve their outdoor recreation aspirations.

### What it looks like to give back

Our MAC alumni epitomize The Mountaineers vision of a volunteer-led organization, empowering young recreationists to get outside safely and equipping them with the knowledge to teach others how to do the same. Hear from Blake Bundesmann, a former MAC student, on what it was like to return to MAC as a volunteer:





Left to right: Blake attaching his lunch to a haul line before a climb. Photo by Ryan Welsh. Lily topping on a boulder once hanging high above the valley floor on the Stawamus Chief. MAC Alumni Linus Skukas with Simon Hove before climbing the first pitch of Spirit of Squamish.

"As a MAC alumni, returning to the annual MAC trip in Squamish as a volunteer was a wonderful way to give back to the program and step into the shoes of some of the awesome mentors that taught me how to be self-sufficient in the outdoors. I got the opportunity to take several students on their first multi pitch, and it brought back memories of my first MAC multi-pitch experience.

"I was proud to see younger members from my time in MAC growing up and taking leadership positions and developing skills for themselves and others. Being a MAC volunteer is a great opportunity to practice both my risk management and group leadership skills, and to test my problem solving skills with unexpected challenges. Coming back as a volunteer is a very different experience than when I was a participant, but the core values of MAC have not changed and it's great to see the program grow.

"My favorite memory is climbing Spirit of Squamish with [my cousin] Lily. It was super fun to have a family bonding moment while giving back and also getting to climb something so awesome with someone who can warm up on my projects."

Blake's experience volunteering with MAC embodies what leadership looks like with The Mountaineers: well-rounded, safety-oriented, and collaborative. Our youth programs are lucky to have volunteers like Blake supporting our current MAC students - youth leaders like him enrich everyone's experience.

## The importance of seeing yourself in a mentor

MAC is a valuable program not only because it cultivates future leaders, but because it provides younger recreationists with the unique opportunity to learn from their own colleagues. Hear from MAC student Lily Peeper, Blake's aforementioned cousin, on her perspective learning from her peers during last summer's MAC trip to Squamish, BC:

"My cousins, Rylee and Blake, joined MAC before me and were the ones who encouraged me to sign up as well. Both of them would check in on me and help teach me without interfering with my independence. One of the few differences when Blake came back as a volunteer was that I was surprised by how much he had learned at college. For example, we were having trouble finding anchor kits (although I had checked for them the night before), so he taught me a new anchor [system]. Since my goal for the Squamish trip was to become more comfortable with leading on trad, he let me lead a lot of the pitches.

"Climbing Spirit of Squamish was very fun, and I got to put a lot of the skills I learned throughout MAC together. I was surprised and excited about the number of students who returned. Usually, there are a few people who always return, and a few people from the year before. When I talk with the other students, most of them plan to or want to come back for a few days on the summer trip."

Because of the generations of MAC students and volunteers who return to give back to their community, MAC Alumni like Blake have the ability to step into leadership roles, and MAC students like Lily are able to leave their comfort zones and have amazing climbing experiences.

## Shaping tomorrow's outdoor leaders

Blake and Lily's stories remind me of MAC's vision and goal: for students to graduate as highly competent outdoor leaders with skills that will shape their relationship with the mountains and other recreationists into their adult lives. We want our students to reach beyond that "ah-ha" moment of when a skill clicks, and envision themselves as leaders who can pass on those "ah-ha" moments to others. I'm proud to say we have accomplished this goal, and are continuing to do so. ▲▲

*The experiences students have in our MAC program wouldn't be possible without the support of our volunteer leaders. If you're interested in volunteering with MAC, please contact [alvaro@mountaineers.org](mailto:alvaro@mountaineers.org) to learn more.*



# FORAGING & FEASTING

Mushroom Weekend at Meany Lodge

By Vienna Christensen, Manager of Volunteer Development







Left: Daniel Winkler, *Fruits of the Forest* author, teaching foragers how to examine mushrooms. Right: Jerry Stein, Danny Miller, and other PSMS mycologists receiving and sorting our bountiful fungi harvest at "The Zoo."



As I step into the warmth of the Meany Lodge common area, a cacophony of *oohs* and *aahs* leads me to a table at the front that is overflowing with various mushrooms. Beneath blacklight, one glows vibrant neon. Another puff ball mushroom releases dark clouds when I squish it. Across the table, I spot smaller species: tiny slime molds. Finally, my eyes and nose discover a prized matsutake emanating its iconic smell - spicy with notes of cinnamon and pine. With guidance, fellow curious observers and I are invited to taste, smell, and touch the species on display.

My introduction to mycology at the Meany Lodge Mushroom Weekend is a full-sensory experience. Soon, I'll be learning about boletes, amanitas, chanterelles, and more.

## The magic of mushrooms and Meany

Mushroom Weekend is an annual lodge stay hosted by Meany Lodge volunteers. Members and nonmembers alike are invited to attend for the weekend and learn about Pacific Northwest mushrooms with experts from the Puget Sound Mycological Society (PSMS) and The Mountaineers. Gracious teachers and lodge hosts arrive early to collect an abundance of fungi for participants to learn from and observe, and then lead foraging outings throughout the weekend to teach participants how to spot, identify, and harvest mushrooms. Along the way, participants are treated to various surprises and mushroom-inspired workshops.

At the center of the weekend's magic is Meany Lodge. When you arrive at the lodge, you are greeted by a Meany Lodge

volunteer, such as Mountaineers member Sheridan Botts. After a thorough debrief on lodge stay information, muddy boots are swapped for slippers before you make your way up the well-loved wooden stairs. Exploring the building, you learn quickly that every nook and cranny holds stories that speak to the generations of volunteers who have cherished these grounds.

## Learning and dreaming of mushrooms

As I soak in the various sensations, the dining hall bustles with vibrant conversation and flowing libations. At the room's center, long tables are lined with ID charts that we will later use to practice keying mushrooms.

Before long, the booming voice of long-time Meany Lodge Committee Chair Chuck Welter calls the room to order. Mycologist and avid fungi enthusiast Danny Miller briefs us on the basics of mushroom identification, and dispels myths and fears about mushrooms and how to handle them. I never knew that you could taste and spit out most mushrooms without incurring any harm. Swallowing is where the real danger lies. I also learn that most mushrooms are ok to touch, as long as you wash your hands thoroughly before you eat. As Danny continues to teach, any fear and trepidation I had about mushrooms melts away.

Though we were told dinner would not be provided, there is no shortage of snacks. We are invited to indulge in delicious mushroom appetizers. (As Chuck says, "If you leave Meany hungry, it's your own fault.")





Danny Miller unpacking all our mushroom finds and their unique qualities.

As we snack, PSMS member and Mountaineers scrambling leader Jerry Stein teaches us how to safely and confidently forage this weekend. We're invited to take our first stab at identifying species.

The night ends with drinks, dessert, and lots of mushroom talk. As I lie in my wooden bunk on the lodge's upper floors, mushroom dreams fill my head in anticipation of the coming day.

## My first foray into foraging

Saturday morning, the smell of apple streusel French toast coaxes me from sleep. Today will be a long day of foraging and feasting.

Bellies full and lunch sacks packed, we separate into groups and head to the forest to see what we can find. As luck would have it, I am grouped with Daniel Winkler, renowned mycologist and author of Mountaineers Books publication, *Fruits of the Forest*. Donning a striped hat and gripping a foraging basket, Daniel lays down ground rules through the joyful lilt of his thick German accent. We forage from 9am to 4pm, and stop at three key locations near the lodge.

Our first leap into the foraging world is at a nearby campsite. As we explore the area, Daniel trains our eyes to see the mushrooms around us. Every few steps, a mushroom seems to materialize before him. At first, I struggle to notice anything, but soon my eyes begin to recognize fungi everywhere, from tiny slime molds no bigger than pushpins to jelly-like witches' butters to massive russulas and rotting boletes. After about 30 minutes, we regroup in the parking lot and hold out our treasures. The variety found in such a short time is astounding. My prized finds include the western

gilled bolete (*Phylloporus arenicola*) with its coffee-brown top and highlighter-yellow gills that bruise deep blue when touched.

At our next stop, we're introduced to entirely new terrain. Daniel charges his way through towering trees and deep into the forest at unrivaled speed, while I clumsily claw my way up the steep hillside and do my best to leave no trace and keep my eyes peeled. I walk slowly, investigating decaying stumps and crumbling logs. The serenity of the forest, matched with the wonder of each new mushroom find, makes for an unforgettable experience. The hours feel like minutes and before I know it, we're sharing our finds back at the cars. One participant, Shelby Olson, reveals a striking blue stropharia and a giant shrimp russula (*Russula xerampelina*). Another participant holds out a king bolete with a cap as big and round as a dinner plate. We gush over our new treasures while enjoying lunch. Our egg cartons, baskets, and sacks are already overflowing with mushrooms.

Our last site of the day is closer to the lodge but no less abundant. After more foraging, we return to the lodge triumphant, loaded with prized matsutakes and golden chanterelles, as well as toxic amanitas and countless other finds.

## A mushroom feast

Back at the lodge (in a specific building named "The Zoo"), Danny and other PSMS leaders help sort and identify our finds. Our haul is huge, filling several large tables with every shape, size, and hue of mushroom. The mycologists, equipped with years of knowledge and experience, distinguish our finds by genus and type.





Vienna with an egg carton full of her first mushroom finds.

As the mycologists continue sorting, we head back to the main building. Just outside the door, Chuck had been hard at work stoking a warm fire and setting up benches for us to eat and celebrate the day's work. We snack on mushroom dips, succulent stuffed mushrooms, and mushroom ceviche. Mulled wine and spiced cider warm our bellies and hearts as we laugh and chat until dark.

After a few hours of free time, we're ushered to the dining room for a special treat: the Meany Lodge volunteers had transformed our mushroom classroom into a fine banquet hall. Green tablecloths and flower arrangements adorn the tables, along with salads garnished with mushrooms, truffle cheese, and wine. Our servers are the children of Meany Lodge volunteers, who make up an important part of the vibrant lodge community. My mouth waters at the main course: a mushroom risotto and decadent pork roast with mushroom sauce.

With full bellies, lodge host volunteers and participants collectively clean up and wash dishes before Daniel takes the stage. For the next few hours, he blows our minds with facts and anecdotes about edible mushrooms and their dangerous lookalikes. Everyone is entranced by the fascinating world of fungi. (I was slightly horrified to discover that cordyceps, a genus of fungi, can inhabit and control living beings, like bugs, essentially turning them into mushroom zombies.)

Just when we think the night is over, we turn to find a spectacular dessert buffet before us. Trays overflowing with brownies, cookies, lemon bars, macarons, and mushroom-shaped chocolates are soon left bare. Laughter and storytelling continue long into the night.

## The versatility of a mushroom

On the morning of our last day, another bountiful breakfast gives us the energy to hit the ground running. After a tour of the property provided by Chuck, Danny leads us through a deep dive on our finds from yesterday's harvest. He gushes over each genus and species, and shares the unique qualities of each. Some smell as sweet as bubble gum or as foul as rotting fish, while others jiggle like Jello or snap like chalk. Our collection is going to be showcased at next week's Puget Sound Mycological Society show.

Later, I learn that there's far more you can do with mushrooms than forage and eat them. During a mushroom dyeing workshop, vibrantly colored yarn covers the tables as guest presenter Marium Richards dazzles us with a demonstration on how to dye textiles using mushrooms and mosses. I watch in awe as old man's beard lichen is used to dye yarn a golden yellow, and dried lobster mushrooms are used to produce a lovely pinkish-red. Next, we receive a mushroom cooking demonstration on how to "dry fry" mushrooms so that our dishes don't end up soggy and slimy. We learn how to make a delectable mushroom appetizer just before a hearty lunch of mushroom soup, featuring leftovers from our previous meals.

All too soon, it's time to pack, clean up, and make our way back to the city. As a parting gift, we are sent away with mushroom growing kits so we can continue the fun from our very own homes. By the weekend's end, we leave with new knowledge, new friends, and a new hobby – or in my case, obsession. ▲

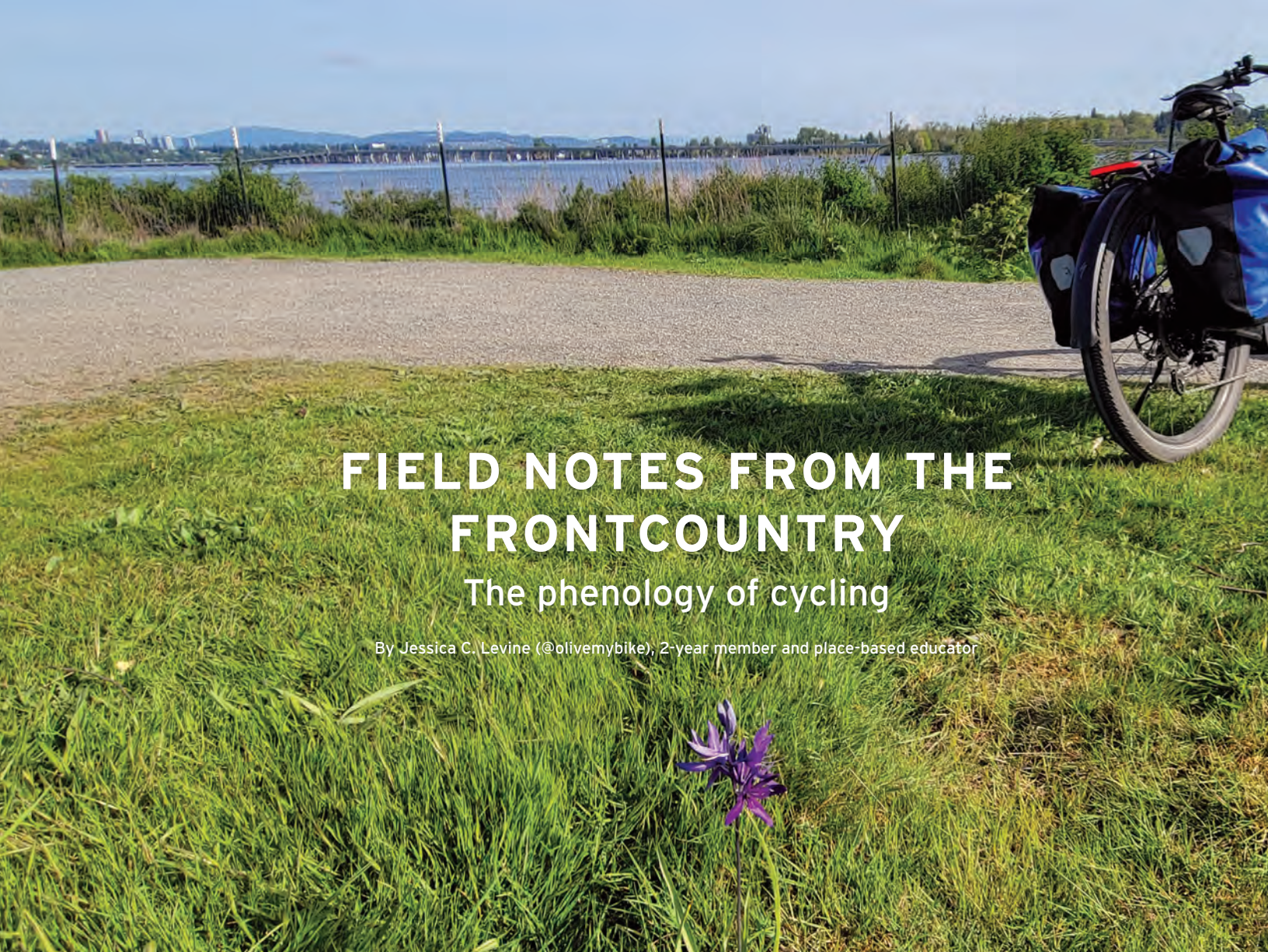


Tiny mushrooms found while foraging.

A special thank you to Chuck Welter and the Meany Lodge Committee, all Meany Lodge volunteers, and the Puget Sound Mycological Society for the intentionality, care, and hospitality that made this weekend my most treasured Mountaineers experience.

I encourage everyone to take a naturalist course or activity, read Daniel's book, *Fruits of the Forest*, and sign up for the next Mushroom Weekend at Meany Lodge. Registration for the 2025 Meany Mushroom Weekend opens in August. Keep an eye on our website for registration details.





# FIELD NOTES FROM THE FRONTCOUNTRY

## The phenology of cycling

By Jessica C. Levine (@olivemybike), 2-year member and place-based educator

*"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature - the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter."*

- Rachel Carson, *The Sense of Wonder*

I take nearly the same route on my bike commute every day. I know the road, its gradient, and contours. I know where potholes, speed bumps, and stop signs require focused attention, and thus where I can shift my curiosity to nearby nature... to the sky, the shoreline, the forest floor, and surrounding vegetation.

Riding the same road, again and again, also leads to new experiences. I find reverence for the natural world each day, through shifting light and seasons. Without a windshield, I can tune my senses to my surroundings. My separateness from nature becomes an illusion. I feel more connected.

Beyond the benefits of health, efficient travel times, and free parking, my carbon-cutting bike commute offers the gifts of familiarity: familiar flora and fauna, fragrances, and daily

surprises. The landscape becomes a constant companion in my travels. It's part of the adventure. It's a source of wonder.

### The seasons cycle, too

Phenology, a word stemming from the Greek "to show and to bring light to," is the study of cyclical events often observed by the ecological markers that showcase shifting biological phenomena, such as budding flowers in spring or yellow leaves in fall. As a year-round bike commuter, my rides feel like an extension of this seasonal phenology.

It's easy to notice the cycling of seasons from the saddle. Look around. Take notes. What birds, cloud patterns, or garden flowers do you see? How does speed or slowness bring these gifts to your eyes?

Whether or not you track the weather, you'll notice that humidity records its relativity on our faces, sometimes with a fine mist. Temperature tells our toes to twitch to warm up, or to relax along the ride. On my daily commute, I'm under the weather. Wind, rain, sun... I'm part of it all.

From my saddle, I've learned that what you choose to notice shapes your moment. Be curious, whatever your environment.





Pausing mid-commute to take note of surroundings. Photos, illustrations, and poem by Jessica C. Levine.

Experiencing the natural world doesn't only happen far away or in places accessed by car. Instead, nature is right here, right where you are. You can ride right along with it - all you have to do is look at what's just beyond your wheels.

Sure, some rides are for getting somewhere fast. But others are for rambling. Don't be afraid to slow down. Paying attention is usually worth the pause.

## Summer: Savoring sun and shade

Summer is short. Savor every moment. In fact, the act of savoring might be a secret to greater happiness and mindfulness.

Imagine the peach you pull from your panniers, the roadside blackberries that burst in your mouth and stain your fingertips, the sundrenched bench where you rest your wheels as you take a dip in the lake after a long ride.

The foliage of deciduous trees is full. Watch the dappled light along the path. Shadows grow and shrink and paint patterns throughout the day. A pair of perched bald eagles laughs above.

Some say the art of adventure is to get home before dark.



Afternoon light at Lake Washington, winter.



Sunny skies at Lake Washington, spring.

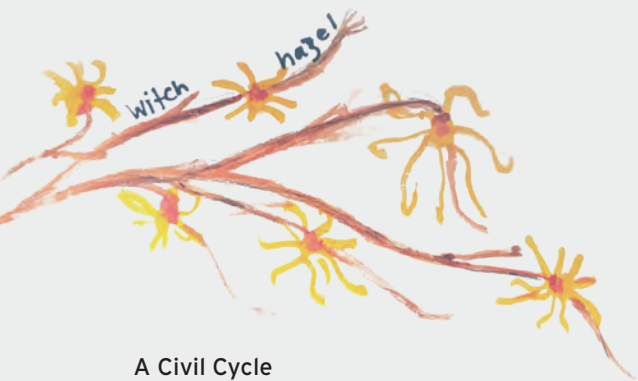


Smoky skies at Lake Washington, fall.



Sunrise at Lake Washington, winter.





## A Civil Cycle

It's well below freezing  
as I'm leaving my house  
at civil twilight by bike  
bundled beyond belief.

It's two degrees below  
zero C,  
the sun is six degrees  
below the horizon,  
see sky barely blushing.

I have a little  
extra time before school  
and I take the long way.  
The gravel path is frozen  
solid and the edge  
of the lake is still  
with cracked ice.  
A beautiful, belted kingfisher  
spies me before I pedal beneath  
as it chatters away.

Then, just around the corner,  
breathtaking, the mountain  
spy-hops out of the lake,  
sun pops over the peaks  
cascading warm light onto all this fabulous frost.

The cattails, the snowberry,  
the grass, the bench that steals  
my heat as I bend for a quick  
sit and a longer look at all this awe.

My toes are numb  
but my heart is full.

Others might savor a sunset and the twinkle of a few stars before rolling home. I've been known to linger late beyond magic hour, so much so that I'll frequently stay out overnight on bikepacking or bike camping adventures. I let my summer branch beyond the beaten path.

## Autumn: Falling and flying

Autumn is a season where much is falling - falling leaves, falling temperatures, falling back into school routines. As an educator, my regular routines return and I watch what falls around me: bigleaf maples and deeply veined horse chestnut leaves. Ochre and sienna blanket the path, crunch under my pedals, and clog storm drains.

Like the season, my commute falls too. Set on seven hills carved by glacial retreat, Seattle's topography undulates like a wave, and any cyclist knows that pedaling involves some ups and downs...

The first section of my commute is a stand-in-my-pedals, gravity-gliding goodness that feels like falling, or rather, flying. *Ca-caw*, I shout with the corvids, seeing the world through their eyes and listening to them in song and swoosh. Riding without earbuds helps heighten this interaction. I'll soar, and sometimes even flap my arms (a "look ma, no hands" trick in solidarity with the flock).

My commute hugs the shoreline of Lake Washington. Leaving my bike at a notable gravel edge, I dip a glass jar each fall through the small, green dots of duckweed that coalesce on the water. The world is full of life when you look, even below the surface. The scale of my wonder slides in and out, from big and small: the view of Mount Tahoma, the sunrise over the peaks, a little jar with a screw top lid in my damp, chilly hands.

My students and I will admire the microscopic magic later: daphnia and rotifers swimming in just a drop. Later in the season, I'll return to this spot to linger at last light, each day a little less.

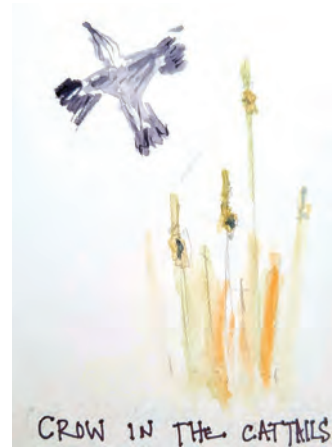
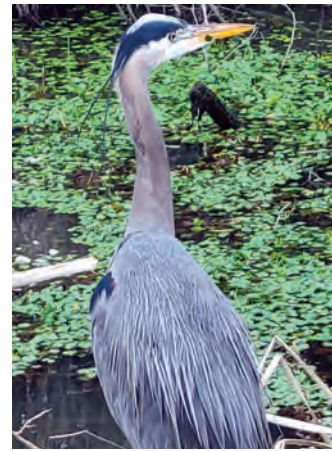
## Winter: Rain and frost

It's dark. The morning is dark, and the afternoon bike home is darn near dark, too. But the dark sky is filled with the magic of stars, aligned planets, and a snow moon reminding me that I never have to scrape ice.

Just being outside lifts my mood, making me feel grounded and connected. Under streetlights, the white tail of a rabbit darts across the street. Once or twice, I've seen a coyote trot across my path, its bushy, gray tail hanging low with the fog. Many winter mornings, rain speckles my glasses, making kaleidoscopes of tail and traffic lights, or creating a pattering rhythm on my helmet. This is the sound of the season. *Splash, thwap. Ping. Pitter, patter. Plop. Chuckle. Giggle.* You've heard the saying: There's no bad weather, only bad gear.

Once this winter, I was startled by a flat tail on the lumbering body of some beast beside the small channel. It took me a minute to register this beaver out of water as he cruised the gravel in the middle of the path. By the time I put my foot down to dig my camera out of my bag, he had entered the water without a splash. When I stepped closer, weaving between tanned and twisted cat tails, he smacked his tail and flushed a flock of surf scoots, black wings wiggling away. I missed the photograph, but will never miss the distraction of having devices on my handlebars.





Photos clockwise from top left: Leaving the bike to walk toward surprises. A heron at the lake's edge. Indian plum, the harbinger of spring.

## Spring: Pedaling by petals

According to UW meteorologist Cliff Mass, Seattle has the longest spring season of any city in the country, with the most days between 50 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit. As we hurtle out of the big dark toward the vernal equinox, the amount of change in these months is rapid and redolent. In the light, we can see more colors. Pay attention to the nuances - the subtleties of a color's shade and hue, as well as the textures.

First, fixate on the greens. A fan of paint chips doesn't do justice to the range of greens present in the Emerald City. While rhododendrons, cedar, and salal remain richly evergreen all winter, horsetail - now emerging from a roadside ditch - reaches out of the winter duff like a paintbrush loaded with sap green and striped with chartreuse. At nearly eye level, look for the harbinger of spring: Indian plum. First a rosette, then skyward, oval-shaped lime leaves before pendant white flowers speckle the urban woods. Through twigs and damp, squelchy spots below the paths, the neon spadix and hood of the skunk cabbage's spathe announce spring in both color and aroma. Welcome back friends, it's nice to see you.

I pedal by petals and watch witch hazel show off well before spring, with yellow or red slender straps, like little strips of flagging tape. Then, the saracocia and daphne scent the air with a jasmine-like perfume that stops me cold. Catkins, a cylindrical cluster of petalless flowers, dangle and drip from

birch and alder, depositing pollen to the wind. The winged seed samaras of bigleaf maple trees twist and tumble down. Red flowering currants and neighborhood camellias remind me of my grandmother's lipstick. Cherry blossoms burst around the corner. In a few weeks' time, the pavement will look like it's covered in pink snow. Magnolia petals, thick and pale pink like my puffy coat, do the same and brown beneath my tires.

## Seasons and cycles: Back around again

Summer returns with early morning sunrises and late sunsets. Our days expand. We are full, and have come full circle, back around to savor cycles from the saddle.

The route is familiar, and yet somehow new. There is an idiom that says you can't step twice in the same river. This is especially true if you adopt a naturalist's perspective. Lean over the handlebars, and look. See how cycling attunes your senses.

Paying attention to nearby nature is a skill for any season. And whatever the season, you make the road by riding. By riding, you notice; by noticing, you wonder; by wondering, you learn; and by learning, you participate in the shared language and knowledge of nature's community.

As you ride, what will you notice this time? How might you note these moments of wonder on our pale blue dot, spinning another cycle around the sun? ▲▲



# Finding Friends Among Fjords

By Andy Cahn, 21-year member

Our shadows accompanying us as we hike through Iceland.  
All photos by Andy Cahn.

Resting the ridge after a long climb, we stand enchanted. Ahead of us stretches a gorgeous fjord. Across the way, cliffs crash into the sun-sparkled water. To the right, a valley ringed by mountains rises from the fjord's head. To the left, the mouth of the fjord opens to the sea. Coastal clouds cast shadows that dance across the water.

This scene was one of many stunning views I enjoyed during last summer's backpacking Global Adventure to eastern Iceland. It was my first time participating in a Mountaineers Global Adventure; I wasn't sure what to expect, but I soon learned that these trips are as much about making friends as they are about seeing amazing sights.

The first half of the trip involved four days of hiking along the Viknaslóðir trail, from hut to hut and from fjord to fjord. Each day, we hiked up and over the edge of one fjord and down to the next (except for one day when we did that twice). Our hut accommodations were primitive but pleasant. Without running water or electricity, we drew water from nearby streams.

The second half of the trip also involved four days of hut-to-hut hiking as we traversed the Lónsöræfi mountain range. We started in the highlands, where we skirted the edge of Europe's largest icefield, Vatnajökull (covering ten percent of the country), then descended to the coast through a stunning canyon. On this section of the trail, we were met with strong, cold, and dry winds coming off the icefields. The terrain was barren; very few plants survive the desiccating winds. Large boulders anchored the huts and outhouses to prevent the winds from toppling them.

Because Iceland is almost completely denuded of trees, we enjoyed panoramic views nearly the entire trip. And with ubiquitous fresh basalt cliffs and bountiful rain, waterfalls



Smiles at one of Iceland's many waterfalls.

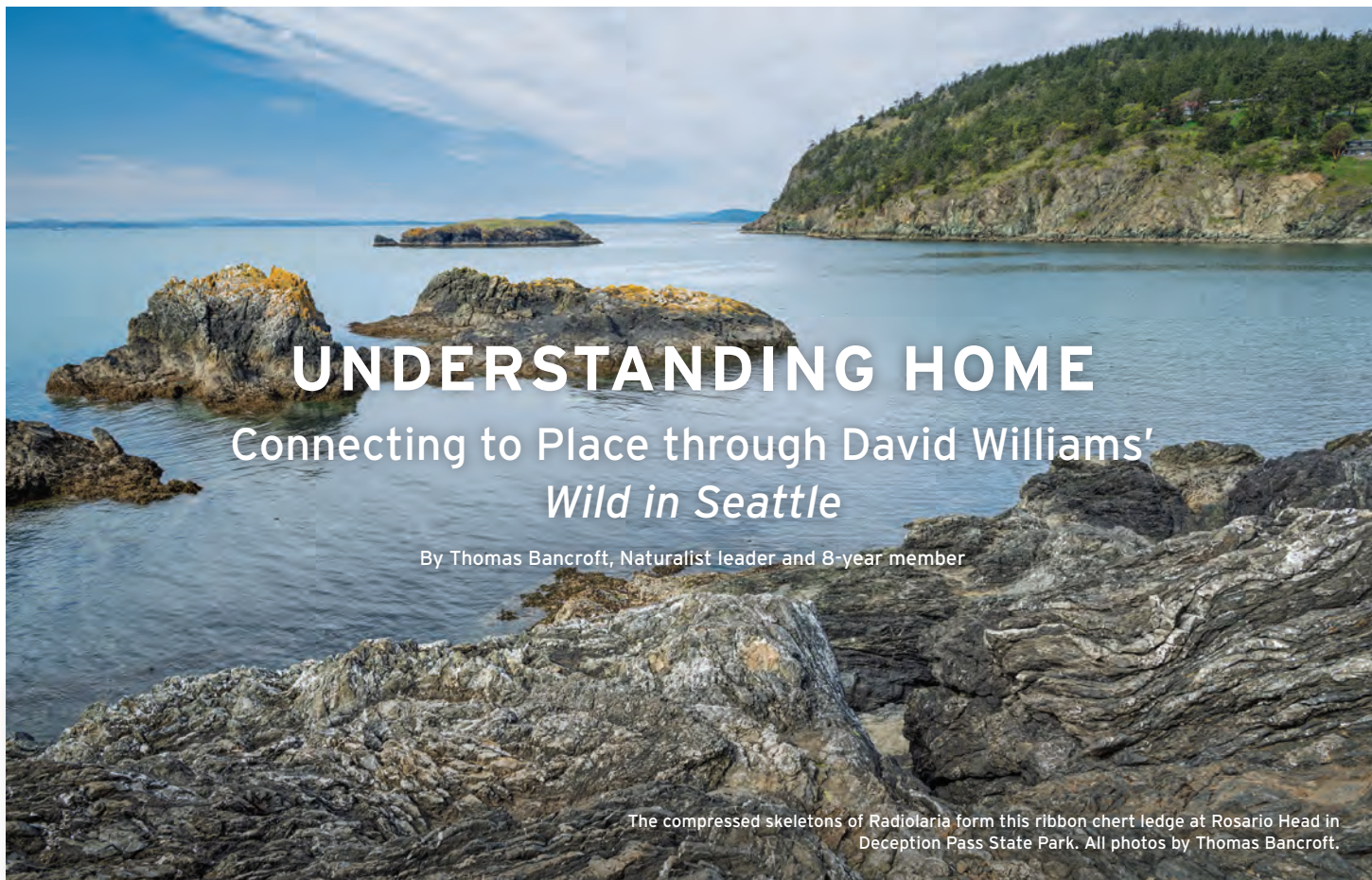
abound. You can scarcely stand anywhere in the country without seeing a waterfall. One day, we saw ten within a five-mile section of trail.

Over the course of ten days, our band of Mountaineers became fast friends. We bonded over shared experiences such as helping each other cross ice-cold streams, challenging each other to try hákarl (fermented shark meat), soaking in hot springs, and gawking at amazing sunsets. (To keep the friendships fresh, our group even held a reunion dinner in January.)

I particularly enjoyed the contrast between the verdant lowlands covered in grasses, lichens, and Arctic cotton, and the desolate uplands barren of greenery. My favorite snapshot from the trip is a photo of a vast grassy plain rising to a distant chain of mountains. In the foreground, you can see ghostly images midstep in the journey from strangers to friends. ▲▲

*Interested in your own international experience? The Mountaineers offers a number of Global Adventures trips led by experienced volunteers to help you explore the world. For more information, visit [mountaineers.org/globaladventures](https://mountaineers.org/globaladventures).*





# UNDERSTANDING HOME

## Connecting to Place through David Williams' *Wild in Seattle*

By Thomas Bancroft, Naturalist leader and 8-year member

The compressed skeletons of Radiolaria form this ribbon chert ledge at Rosario Head in Deception Pass State Park. All photos by Thomas Bancroft.

**T**he folded rock feels like sandpaper. My index finger traces the miniature ridges, trying to sense the organisms that formed them. Some hundred and fifty million years ago, billions of Radiolaria skeletons floated to the ocean floor. The pressure from the ocean's depth compressed and crunched the skeletons into a ribbon chert (a form of sedimentary rock). Then the chert moved, through continental drift, from Baja California to northern Washington, where the ocean crust uplifted and folded to form the landscape where I've come today: Rosario Head.

In the past three months, I've visited Rosario Head in Deception Pass State Park five times... just to sit on these ancient skeletons. Why do I keep returning?

### The gift of getting to know a place

For friend and award-winning natural history author David B. Williams, connecting to place involves uncovering the mysteries of our landscapes and what draws us to them. In his new Mountaineers Books title, *Wild in Seattle: Stories at the Crossroads of People and Nature*, Williams shares a collection of essays that explore the interconnectedness of Seattle's natural, urban, and geological wonders. His words inspire me to look deeper at the environment around me and reflect on my place within it.

Sitting in the familiarity of Rosario Head, I am reminded of Williams' stories as a park ranger, which on occasion included encountering hikers who were eager for trail recommendations but hesitant to revisit trails they'd already hiked. But there is so much we can learn, come to expect, and ponder by wandering the same places, Williams encourages.

Mountaineers friends often ask me if I plan to lead this or that hike again. Like me, they enjoy wandering the same places, and know well how a place feels like a friend the more you visit.

### Uncovering geology's layered stories

My second visit to Rosario Head was a Mountaineers trip I led in January. The mosses and lichens were extraordinary - vibrant and alive. *Pelegra*, *Parmelia*, and *Dicranum* blanketed the rocks while fishnet lichens dangled from trees in long, cross-thatched strands.

My co-leader, Stewart, explained to the group how the area's geology illuminates the formation of Washington. When dinosaurs evolved, the west coast of North America was near where Spokane is now. Multiple accretions of oceanic plates widened the continent, and uplifting (the raising of the Earth's crust through tectonic forces) shaped the state.

Since hearing Stewart's insights, I've read more about Deception Pass. I'm still trying to comprehend its geology. Dr. Juliet Crider of the University of Washington says the ocean floor - basalt, chert, argillite - folded over on itself as it moved and uplifted, creating these patterns. The ribbon chert is obvious as I push off it with my hand to stand. Higher on the cliff is a layer of oceanic basalt. And these darker rocks at my knees might be argillite beds (which have apparently undergone slight metamorphism from the pressure and heat during their journey). With each visit, I feel I come closer to deciphering these layers.













Clockwise from top left: Fishnet lichen (*Ramalina menziesii*) hangs from trees in long strands that intertwine. A female elephant seal pulls out on the beach by Rosario Head where she will molt before heading back to the ocean. Greywacke is a poorly sorted coarse-grained sandstone.



## Listening to what the land teaches

Williams' words "knowledge threads" and "connections" come to mind. Sometimes, in unexpected places, these pieces fuse.

On a recent field trip I led with The Mountaineers, we hiked to Summerland, which boasts spectacular subalpine meadows in July and August. To get to Summerland, one travels up the Fryingpan Creek Trail, whose bottom third section passes through an old-growth forest of western hemlocks and Pacific silver firs. Most people (myself included) hot-foot it through the trees to reach views at higher elevations. But the stories in that forest are amazing.

In *Wild in Seattle*, Williams discusses how volcanic mudflows called lahars deposited sediment along the Duwamish River. I knew about the devastation of the Osceola Mud Flow (which buried a large portion of the Puget Sound lowland around 5,600 years ago), but Williams mentions that another lahar, known as the Fryingpan Creek Flow, had approached Puget Sound.

"Be aware. Pay attention. Slow down," Williams reminds.

Meandering through Fryingpan Creek Trail, I took my time and encouraged my students to do the same. In the forest, I challenged the group to search for Douglas firs (which are sparse along this trail) and note the age distribution. The few we found were gigantic, two to three feet in diameter. This species - which can live for a thousand years - is shade-intolerant, so these individuals must have germinated when there wasn't a dense old-growth forest. I speculated what might have disturbed the forest and given these monarchs a chance to gain a foothold: maybe landslides or a fire. But I hadn't considered a lahar. Since reading Williams's mention of the Fryingpan Creek Flow, I've tracked down several geology papers to help fill the gaps. The Fryingpan Creek Lahar occurred about eleven hundred years ago and might have been the disturbance.

"No matter where these paths lead me, I feel I am rewarded by the knowledge I gain," Williams says.

## Finding home in a shifting landscape

High-pitched, rolling notes alert me to black oystercatchers. I smile. White-crowned sparrows are here too, courting. Rosario Head rises another 30 to 40 feet above my perch. The top is flat, the size of a city block. In the middle lies a rock, greywacke,



almost as big as a Prius, left by the last Pleistocene glacier. Like the chert, Rosario Head is now the greywacke's home.

I feel the touch of earth beneath my feet that once lined the ocean off Baja California. Home is always moving, as are the organisms within it. When I moved to the Pacific Northwest, I always thought I'd move back east after my job ended. But here I stay, returning to the same places.

Williams writes that becoming established in a new place means learning what binds the organisms and land together. As I uncover the landscape's history, I become entangled in its story. Is this why I keep returning to Rosario Head?

I hear a loud belch reverberate through the park. A harbor seal, I think - but no, it's an elephant seal. This individual (#1285) pulled out of the water to go through her molt. I learn that she was born on Whidbey Island in 2018, the second pup to a female who established a new colony. Puget Sound is a recent expansion for this species.

I watch the seal, who looks at home in her species' relatively new surroundings, and muse, "These lands nourish me, too." ▲▲

*Wild in Seattle: Stories at the Crossroads of People and Nature is available for purchase at our Seattle Program Center Bookstore, online at [mountaineersbooks.org](http://mountaineersbooks.org), and everywhere books are sold.*



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Clockwise from top: Katjarina, Stephen, and a classmate on Mt. Baker during their crevasse rescue field trip. Stephen showing off his new mountain goat tattoo on the top of Dewey Peak shortly before the accident that took his life. Katjarina and Stephen bonded over a love of mountain goats and both carried stuffed animal mascots on their adventures. Since Stephen's death, Katjarina has continued to carry his goat for him. All photos courtesy of Katjarina Hurt.



# BREAKING THE HALO

## How One Tragedy Inspired a New Approach to Risk Management

By Katjarina Hurt, 8-year member and Leadership Development Series speaker

**O**n August 14, 2018, my best friend Stephen Kornbluth and two other climbers set out to summit Dewey Peak on the Sunrise side of Mt. Rainier. During the descent, the anchor built to support their rappel down the mountain failed, and Stephen fell. Despite heroic efforts from the other climbers to provide emergency care, Stephen did not survive.

Two weeks later, I was part of a team that summited Dewey Peak to try to recreate the accident. We brought with us photos from Stephen's phone and materials to rebuild the anchor. Our goal was to learn from the tragedy and share our findings with the greater climbing community to prevent future accidents. While the technical findings were helpful, the human-centered elements of the incident impacted me the most. With the learnings from our climb, I developed a new approach to risk management that I call Breaking the Halo.

This is my sixth year presenting Breaking the Halo with The Mountaineers. During the 2025 South Sound Leadership Conference, I was approached by audience members who wanted to know how I was able to keep talking about the tragedy that took the life of my best friend. "Is it hard?" a senior member of the Olympia Branch asked. "Some days more than others," I replied. "But it keeps his memory alive for me. If there's even a chance of saving more lives, I will keep talking about his story forever."

### What tragedy teaches

The reports from the survivors of the Dewey Peak climb included small details and decisions that became much more consequential when examined retrospectively. They chose to climb Dewey Peak largely because it was a summit on the Rainier 100 list that could be done in a single day with relatively inexperienced climbers. The number of ropes and kinds of anchor building materials brought were based on trip reports that described the route as "not a real climb" and more of a scramble. The location of the rappel and construction of the anchor came down to the experience of just one lead climber. It was reported that shortly before the group began to rappel, Stephen said he "did not like the look of the anchor," but after some discussion, the group proceeded. That any one of these decisions was the sole factor resulting in Stephen's death is unlikely; however, the combination of them all resulted in a tragic outcome.

We can learn how to avoid tragic outcomes like this by looking at these decisions through the lens of heuristic traps. Heuristic traps are mental shortcuts or assumptions that lead to poor decision making. The concept of these traps was first developed (thanks to the research of NOLS instructor Ian McCammon) in reference to the human-centered causes of avalanche fatalities and has since become well known in outdoor risk management, especially as it pertains to snow recreation. Many Mountaineers and outdoor enthusiasts encounter the concept of heuristic traps in avalanche awareness courses when learning the acronym FACETS: Familiarity, Acceptance, Commitment, Expert Halo, Tracks/Scarcity, and Social Proof. FACETS represents six common thinking errors and areas of complacency that winter recreationists encounter in avalanche terrain.

As a Basic Alpine Climbing course student, Stephen was taught these traps. The problem was that Stephen and other students were generally only taught to consider these heuristics in avalanche terrain. However, Stephen's rock climb took place in August, on a route with no snow or avalanche risk. And as a result, the risk management framework was far from top of mind.

Had the climbers thought to apply avalanche-related risk management to their summer recreation, maybe the outcome would have been different. Perhaps they would have realized that checking another peak off the Rainier 100 list wasn't a good enough reason to climb that day. Or perhaps the two novice climbers would have vocalized their concerns with more certainty.

These hypotheticals started several long conversations that eventually led to two realizations: 1) There needs to be a universal tool for identifying hazards and risks in any season, and 2) Anyone in a student, beginner, or subordinate role should know how to vocalize concern, especially if they don't have the technical understanding or confidence.

"Talk about a halo," one team member said as we descended Dewey Peak after re-creating the incident and processing our painful conclusions. I agreed, but I wasn't convinced that the halo was just over the climb leader.



## Halos: A universal approach

A common misconception is that the trip leader is the only one responsible for managing risk, but participants play a pivotal role as well. “See something, say something” is a common refrain when it comes to managing risk, but many times people don’t know what they are seeing or how to put what they see into words. Thus began Breaking the Halo, a risk management framework that gives participants the ability to recognize when and how halos are placed, and vocalize when something feels wrong.

Halos can appear anywhere, at any time. They are metaphors that suggest a mark of omniscience appearing over the person in the group with the most experience, skill, or wisdom. These halos stand for assumptions, complacency, failure to properly communicate, ego, and other human characteristics that jeopardize safety. When we see someone and put a “halo” on them, we’re more likely to follow them into dangerous situations, and less likely to speak up even when our gut screams something is wrong.

The “expert” in the group isn’t the only one who can get a halo placed on them. Halos can appear on the instructor or group leader, on the peer with more experience, or on the person who steps onto the trail first and literally leads the group forward even though they’re not the actual trip leader. Halos can appear on anyone we look to for information or choose to rely on for decisions, and they can be placed on any of us without us even knowing.

Halos can also be placed on the intangibles such as skills, certificates of achievement, or outdoor resumes like miles paddled and mountains summited. We can place halos on people with the most impressive recreation accomplishments without considering how current their knowledge is, how recently they’ve refreshed their skills, or what their motivation is for choosing a destination (i.e. if the location is the best fit for the group or merely the next goal on their checklist).

Halos can appear over the gear we carry and the reliance we place on our safety equipment. A skier or bicyclist who wears a helmet may choose to go faster when the helmet is on because they know their head is safe – but what about their unprotected back, chest, or pelvis where other life-sustaining organs are housed? In addition, the halos over those with newer gear can blind us to the abilities and experiences of others with older, less expensive, or unfamiliar gear. (Just because someone has the newest and greatest equipment doesn’t necessarily mean they know how to use it.)

From the trails we follow to the effectiveness of GPS technology to what it really means to rely on the essentials we carry in an emergency, halos can appear anywhere we make assumptions or let habit and muscle memory replace observation and critical thinking. By using a universal symbol for when something is wrong or a risk isn’t being addressed, a participant can speak up when they see something, even if they don’t have the vocabulary to name their concern. Someone can say, “I see a halo” and the group will understand there is something worth examining and discussing. If assessed appropriately, that halo can be broken and the risk properly managed.



Top: A mixed team of climbers and rescuers re-creating Stephen's accident at Dewey Peak using photographs recovered from his phone.  
Bottom: Katjarina sharing her gratitude with the mountaineering community from the top of Dewey Peak. This photo was taken during the investigation of Stephen's accident.

## The impact of breaking halos

Breaking the Halo was first presented to members of the Olympia Branch Alpine Scrambling and Basic Alpine Climbing courses in 2019. That fall, the presentation was given at the NOLS Wilderness Risk Management course, and word quickly spread about a simpler way to talk about risk, as well as the need to give students and subordinates more confidence to speak up. The following year, The Mountaineers hosted five Breaking the Halo presentations. The number has increased every year since, and the presentation has spread to wider audiences,



including multiple statewide agencies in Washington, Search and Rescue teams across the Western and Rocky Mountain regions of the United States, and international conferences.

With a growing audience, is this framework really making a difference?

Mountaineers Safety Committee reports show a correlation between the increase in Breaking the Halo presentations and an increase in annual reports of Near Misses and Safety Concerns. Numerous instructors and leaders across activities have shared how they incorporate the idea of halos into their courses and activities, and every year more students share stories of being on activities where talking about halos helped them express fear or concern. These impacts are larger than I could have dreamed when I started talking about breaking halos six years ago. While I don't have hard data to prove the framework is making a difference, if even one life was saved or one outcome changed because of these presentations, then the work is worth it.

Is it hard to talk about Stephen's death over and over? I have to admit, it is. After every presentation I feel both elated and exhausted. More than once, I've made a quick escape from the room or computer camera when I felt myself starting to cry.



Top: Stephen at Mt. Baker for crevasse rescue practice during the Basic Alpine Climbing course. Bottom: Stephen "hanging out" while practicing rappel skills outside of class.

No matter how many other lives I might try to save, I cannot reverse the outcome of that day and bring Stephen back.

Those who have experienced grief know it comes in waves. With time, the waves get smaller and farther apart, and that helps me to keep going. What also helps me is to imagine Stephen is with me every time I talk about halos. He is like my guardian angel now, calling me out on the halos I create and reminding me to keep telling our story, so that others may live and love the outdoors as much as he did. ▲▲

## TIPS FOR BREAKING THE HALO

### Instructors

**Discuss halos before the activity.** Begin your trip by having a group discussion about risk management, and encourage participants to share their concerns whenever they arise.

**Find messaging that sticks.** When learning a lot of new skills (especially during complex courses like Basic Alpine Climbing), many adult learners hit their cognitive load quickly. New acronyms like FACETS may not stick, but what often does are more familiar adages such as "See something, say something," which implies similar halo-breaking messaging.

**Be aware of your own halo.** As a trip leader, you are at a high risk of having a halo placed on you by participants. To reduce the halo effect, you can pose decisions as questions so that participants take part in group decision making rather than solely relying on you to call the shots.

### Students

**Speak up, even if you can't get the words right.** It can feel embarrassing not knowing the technical terms for how to clearly articulate an issue, but that should never stop you from voicing concern. Saying "I don't know why but something about that doesn't look right" is perfectly acceptable.

**Ask for options.** If something feels wrong, don't be afraid to stop and consider your options. Not all options are going to be good ones, but you should be involved in decision making when there could be significant consequences.

**Always do your homework.** Leaders and instructors play important roles, but they aren't infallible, and you have the right to know how current their skills are and what experience they have with a particular location or activity. Leaders also shouldn't be the only ones with information. Before heading out, make sure you read up on the area you are visiting, look at recent trip reports, and check the weather.



# THE RIVERSEA RANGERS

## STEWARDING WATERWAYS FROM SOURCE TO SEA

By Skye Michel, Communications Manager

Mike Szumski (pictured) and Ken using the inflatable Zodiac to remove marine debris from Cascade Head. All photos courtesy of Ken Sund.

In a shallow, sunlit riverbed, Ken Sund stands shin-deep over his canoe wearing a proud smile. Both hands grip a pickaxe, and two car tires rest in the canoe, their rubber edges peeling from years of subaquatic erosion. Only a few feet of space remain near the bow of the canoe, where Ken will situate himself before paddling down the river, collecting debris along the way.

A self-titled “RiverSea Ranger,” Ken and his friends make up a handful of local residents who steward waterways around Oregon’s Cascade Head, a roughly 102-acre biosphere reserve located near the Oregon coast. Findings from their trash-collecting outings range from the expected (Styrofoam cups, beer cans, and fishing bobs) to the curious (broken plastic chairs, rugs, and television monitors). But what Ken and his fellow stewarding squad are often most interested in extracting are tires, whose chemical makeup harms the local ecosystem and aquatic life.

### A tire’s tread on rivers

While most trash discarded into waterways hypothetically gets carried away by the current, Ken explained that “tires don’t quite make it to the ocean,” instead getting “buried and unburied and buried again as they bump their way downstream.” As the tires settle and decompose, they release toxic microplastics and chemicals that negatively

impact marine behavior, including altered gene expression, reproductive abnormalities, and shortened life expectancy. According to research by *Science*, one chemical biproduct in particular (6PPD-Quinone) has been linked to the death of entire generations of coho salmon in the Pacific Northwest.

“I don’t think the tires are best left where they lie, so I take them out,” said Ken. Using the edge of a pickaxe, hoe, and boat anchor (if the water is deep enough), Ken and his friends gradually shake the tire loose until it can be surfaced, cleaned of gravel, and secured to their canoes. When required, Ken will don a wetsuit and dive underwater to wrestle loose the heavier tires that are too hard to hook with an axe. While working beneath the water’s surface, buoyancy is on their side, but once the tires breach, they can weigh anywhere from 25 to 180 pounds. “Those are the feats of success,” Ken shared, “when you get to remove big tractor tires.”

### Preserving what’s close to home

With a home nestled against the Salmon River, Ken’s tire-extraction escapades began in his backyard. His favorite activity is sea kayaking from his house to the ocean, and during his first trips – when low tide coincided with clear water – pristine views were frequently interrupted by conspicuous waste dotting the riverbed. “I immediately saw there were a lot of tires, so I started pulling them out and paying for the



dumping myself,” he shared. After self-funding the disposal of nearly 100 tires, Ken began partnering with the Surf Rider Foundation’s Newport Chapter, who agreed to help cover the costs of what was becoming trailer-filled loads of tires.

Often accompanying Ken on his trash-collecting paddling trips is friend, fellow RiverSea Ranger, and Senior Fish and Wildlife biologist Mike Szumski. About twice a year, Ken, Mike, and other stewards hold an organized gathering to canoe local rivers such as the Salmon, Yaquina, and Siletz and dig out tires. Occasionally, the group’s hard work makes it into the local paper, which Ken hopes inspires others to think more sustainably about their waste decisions as well as raise awareness of how easy it can be to steward our natural places. “You have to suffer the recognition to promote the idea that people are doing this,” Ken humbly teased. “I am just one of many doing the same thing.”

More often, Ken’s stewardship-oriented paddling trips are impromptu, which is part of the reason why they’re so effective: preserving the natural world is easy when it involves doing what you love. “You develop such an intimate relationship with the river,” Ken said, “and it’s really important to make sure that it remains healthy, and that you encourage the next generation to keep it healthy and happy.” For Ken, stewardship isn’t a separate objective of his paddling trips, but an integrated practice. With stewardship as a guiding ethic in



Top: A haul of tires from a day’s hard work. Bottom: Ken and his wife, Maria Sund, removing tires via paddle board on the Salmon River.



Top: Debris collected from a section of Oregon coastline Ken is responsible for stewarding through his local Adopt a Mile program. Bottom: Mike Szumski stands beside a trailer filled with debris collected by the RiverSea Rangers after a day stewarding the Siletz River.

his recreation, protecting our waters became just as habitual as paddling through them.

As a paddling enthusiast, Ken heads to the waters frequently, and not always just for tires. Sometimes, he’ll make a dedicated trip to an area he knows has been affected by improper waste disposal. “Just a few weeks ago, I saw somebody dumping two pickup loads of remodel debris into a little drainage ditch,” Ken shared, “so I went out there and filled the back of my truck with the help of a neighbor.” Other times, the promise of a peaceful paddle is enough to get Ken outside. “The other day I went out in my canoe with the king tide and just paddled around the estuary where everything floats. I got some beautiful photos and a five-gallon bucket of debris.” Off the waters, Ken and his wife will stroll their neighborhood to pick up trash, and often see their neighbors doing the same. As Ken reminded, “it’s a habit that anyone can get into.”

### An ethic for anywhere, at any age

Raised in San Francisco, California, Ken’s pull toward water began at an early age as he spent his childhood years competing on the swim team and enjoying summer vacations along the Russian River in Guerneville. “No one really had to tell us, but we never liked seeing garbage, especially broken glass which cut our feet as we walked barefoot,” Ken shared, as he recalled the upset he and his brother experienced while





Top: Ken and his canoe of tires extracted from the Siletz River.  
Bottom: A buried tire in the Siletz River awaits removal.

collecting trash along their favorite beach. “One of the local concession stand vendors would trade us a milkshake for a cup full of straws. Twenty seven cents for a milkshake was a lot of money for us at the time, so we were happy to become his beach cleanup crew.”

Those beachside moments of stewardship left a lasting imprint that would inform the rest of Ken’s relationship to place. “That connection - doing a positive thing and getting something back - stays with you,” he shared. “Plus, you’re helping to clean an area where you live and play.”

Eventually, Ken found his way to Oregon and The Mountaineers. Through the Oregon Ocean Paddling Society, Ken met Mountaineer Will Greenough, who encouraged him to join a Mountaineers kayaking trip on the Columbia. Ken was the only participant to show up. The weather was so cold, ice formed on their spray skirts.

As an experienced kayak surfing volunteer, coach, and sea kayak leader, Ken hopes that equipping people with the confidence to explore our waters will also instill a desire to care for them. “I like to share my passions so that other people can develop their skills and not let the outdoors scare them too much,” Ken said. “The Pacific Northwest waters are dangerous, requiring training, practice, stamina, and support,” but as participants improve their confidence under the guidance of trusted teachers, “they see that one of our ethics as an organization is to leave [our waters] better.”

Any participant of Ken’s trips will quickly learn that there’s more to kayaking than just paddling. Ken makes time for moments of stewardship whenever he can, often encouraging participants to join him in filling their hatches with debris during lunch breaks. A popular instructor and paddling partner, Ken shared that “the ones who want to surf with me know they’ve got to participate in my other activities.”

## Ways to be a water steward

If there’s water, there’s a way... and for Ken and his fellow RiverSea Rangers, nearly any floating vehicle can be used as a trash-carrying vessel.

Perhaps the most efficient and stable method of collecting discarded trash is via canoe, which is good for navigating upstream on slow-moving rivers when a more significant load of debris is expected. The larger size allows tires to be laid across the top of the canoe while smaller debris is tucked inside (the challenge is not loading so many tires that stability and paddling are compromised).

Another effective option - especially when there’s a low swell or when rougher waters are expected - is a kayak. Although smaller in size, “you can really get stuff into every nook and cranny of kayaks,” Ken explained, “and then bungee some of the clumsier stuff on top, like the buoys that won’t fit in a hatch.”

What’s alluring about Ken’s water-based stewardship is that many of the places he and his RiverSea Rangers visit are inaccessible by foot. As Ken described, Cascade Head features several waterfalls that drop onto the ocean near adjacent coves where landing is difficult. These areas are what Ken calls “reservoirs of marine debris,” that house buoy floats, rope, and practically anything that floats. All trash that has been discarded along the river - from headwater to tributaries to mouth - gathers here, and unless you have rope and rappelling



skills, the cliffs are too steep to descend. Even with a boat, the swell direction and cobbled shore make these coves difficult to land on without getting hurt. "A lot of fishermen don't like to get too close to these coves because it's really rocky," Ken explained. "It's gnarly for someone with an outboard motor. You don't want to get stuck."

That's where paddle boarding comes in.

"One year, there was just so much stuff [at the cove] that I decided to pre-bag the debris and get a boat to pick it up," Ken shared. With a 12-foot Zodiac donated from Mike's agency, the RiverSea Rangers anchored safely away from shore, paddle boarded to the cove, attached the garbage to their vessels via bungee cord, and then paddled back to load the boat and return upstream. To avoid getting caught in giant wave breaks, they timed their journey for high tide and low swell, and bungeed everything - paddleboard and trash included - to the Zodiac to ensure nothing fell off during the bumpy journey. "It gives us quite an adventurous feeling of success when we do those things" Ken said.

To land his paddleboard on the large, cobbled shores, Ken will remove its fin and crash land on the cove's rocks. He assured that, despite a paddleboard's seemingly meager size, "it's easy to bungee a few large garbage bags or tires to the front."

## A labor of love for anyone

If crash-landing a paddleboard isn't in your wheelhouse, there are plenty of other ways to get involved in stewardship. "A lot of people don't think they can do something until they



Top: A RiverSea Rangers t-shirt, depicting a river meeting the ocean surf, designed by an artist member of Newport's Surfrider Foundation. Bottom: Debris covers the shore of a rocky cove at Cascade Head.



Ken and fellow stewards clean up Cascade Head's watershed after an illegal dump.

try," Ken said. Plus, you don't have to travel very far to make a difference. "Think globally, and act really locally," Ken encouraged. "Radiate out from where you are."

At the age of 72, Ken has seen what he described as "a tremendous degradation" of what he once knew, but he has also witnessed the reward that comes from diligently caring for a place he loves. "My little section of the river is nice and clean," he shared proudly. "It's hard to find tires in it anymore, which is why I branched out to the other rivers with my canoe."

While Ken radiates locally, he still dips his toes in international stewardship, including Vancouver, Canada. "I've given them my suggestions," he shared, like utilizing water taxis or kayakers to collect and pre-bag debris in remote areas. "My attitude is: we've been to the moon. If we can coordinate that, how hard is anything else?"

Everyone has something to contribute, and Ken's contributions extend beyond the waters, showcasing the range of ways we can give back to the places and people we love. "As a Hispanic bilingual, I'm a Red Cross volunteer for disasters like fires," he shared. "We can all be stewards of our lives and those close to us."

Extracting buried river tires, picking up trash, aiding disaster relief... "Anyone can do this stuff. They just have to want to." ▲▲





# THE POWER OF GIVING BACK

## How Stewardship and Leadership Transformed My Outdoor Experience

By Courtenay Schurman, MS, CSCS, 33-year member

In October 2024, my outdoor world shifted. My faithful canine companion injured his paw, and a hiking partner shared she'd be moving out of state, which left me scrambling to find new trail friends. Rather than retreat, I completed the necessary requirements to lead hikes for The Mountaineers and joined stewardship work parties with the Washington Trails Association (WTA). I had no idea that both paths would challenge me, teach me, and expand my relationship with the outdoors in unexpected ways.

### The moment I became a steward

I still remember the thrill of my fifth WTA work party in early 2025 when I earned my Green Hat. The task? Removing a massive, seven-foot-tall root ball off the Eastside Trail on Squak Mountain. With careful coordination, my trail crew spent several hours sawing the rotting tree in half, cutting back its roots, and securing it with a winch. After lunch, we watched with satisfaction as the wire went taut and the root ball tumbled, end over end, down the slope.

*Timber!*

The moment was exhilarating – not just because of the sheer power of human effort, but because I had played a role in restoring a storm-damaged trail that people hadn't been able to enjoy since November. As though signaling the importance of our work, three bald eagles circled overhead

while woodpeckers foraged nearby. Varied thrushes and robins made an appearance, indicating the approach of spring. Our hard work on this trail, as well as the restoration of other trails on Squak damaged by the storms, would soon be enjoyed by emerging hikers. I felt a sense of pride knowing I was a part of making that enjoyment possible.

During this trip, I realized that trails, like people, need care. And that care doesn't just happen – it takes hands-on work from people who love these places.

Stewardship has given me an entirely new appreciation for the places I hike and changed the way I move through the natural world. I no longer just walk on a trail – I see the human labor that keeps it open, the drainage that prevents erosion, and the efforts of countless volunteers who came before me. Now, I am not just a trail user, but a caretaker. Whether removing trash, restoring paths, or teaching others Leave No Trace principles, I take care of the mountains and trails anyway I can.

### From steward to confident leader

As trail work gave me a new lens on the land, leading hikes gave me a new perspective on people. My first mentored hike in November was a test of patience, persistence, and adaptability. A bomb cyclone had just ripped through the region, leaving downed trees, floods, and power outages in





A Washington Trails Association work party on Squak Mountain's Eastside Trail. Duties included removing five large root balls of trees downed during the November windstorms and regrading the remaining trail.



its wake. Twelve people had been on the waitlist for this hike; however, on the day of the trip, we were five strong.

I felt the weight of responsibility – not just for leading a hike, but for ensuring these hikers had a safe, enjoyable experience in unpredictable conditions. I had led climbs and family activities with my husband for The Mountaineers in years past, but this was my first time leading an outing in over a decade. Leading on my own felt like a giant leap of faith.

I remember the overpowering sense of elation when completing that mentored hike – the gratitude I felt toward the hikers who showed up and helped me succeed, the love I felt for the mountains that have captivated me for more than 30 years. Fast forward to today, and my confidence has grown tenfold. My workflow is smoother, my preparation streamlined, and my focus broader. Now, I lead hikes for all experience levels, including helping with the Conditioning Hiking Series, leading birding trips for naturalists, and mentoring new hikers on Mountaineers outings.

As a leader, I bring my stewardship ethic with me. I care for trip participants as I would a beloved trail, paving the way toward a safe and joy-filled recreation practice while paying attention to areas that may need extra encouragement and attention. More than just getting people outside, I see leadership opportunities as a way to steward community by helping people feel more comfortable, confident, and

inspired to appreciate and protect the natural world with like-minded recreationists. Like a pebble cast into a lake, I hope to generate a ripple that encourages recreationists to care for the natural world and each other, while teaching others to do the same.

## The challenges that strengthened me

Giving back isn't always easy.

I see my role as cultivating safe outdoorspeople, and often this involves meeting new hikers where they are – physically and mentally. Some hikers come underprepared, uncertain, or nervous, and navigating these learning curves may be challenging at times. But if other leaders and I can create welcoming and patient spaces that gently guide participants toward informed choices, we make the trails a safer place for everyone. And hopefully in turn, these hikers will share what they've learned with others.

Being a hike leader also surfaced my personal areas of growth; digital navigation remains my Achilles' heel. But leading hikes has given me the chance to practice and improve. I still prefer physical maps and reading the landscape over relying on technology, and I will never ditch the "old school" way (it has never let me down like tech has), but at least I am 100% confident that if tech fails me, I won't fail with it.

In addition to navigation responsibilities, being a leader





Courtenay and her daughter smiling at Granite Lakes.

requires adapting quickly to shifting conditions, logistical challenges, and difficult weather in the off-season (inclement weather resulted in multiple failed attempts to complete my first official Mountaineers hike). I used to be a fair-weather hiker, but this year, I embraced the rain, snow, fog, and cold. My new favorite? Hiking in the snow.

I recently led an early spring trip to Talapus and Olallie Lakes where we had the snow-covered mountain to ourselves. For some participants, this trip was a new foray into winter's backcountry. Others were surprised at the faint blue of the melting ice on Talapus Lake. These remarks reminded me that the challenge of weather is worth the delight of exploring our favorite places during the off-season. Plus, it's always a joy to see the familiar through new eyes, allowing me the chance to appreciate Mother Nature all over again.

Growth, I've realized, happens when we push beyond our comfort zones. Every challenge offers an opportunity to strengthen our adaptability, resilience, and openness to learn. Instead of retreating into the solace and security of my home, I now yearn for the mountains, which always gift a new experience, a new lesson, or a new favorite place to appreciate.

## Lessons from the trails

Stewardship isn't about expertise - it's about showing up. Defined as the responsible management, care, and protection of something with inherent value, you can be a steward in multiple ways. Whether it's leading hikes, restoring trails, or educating and empowering others, every effort matters. If you're unsure where to start, here's what I've learned:

**Anyone can be a steward.** One of the most surprising aspects of stewardship has been the people I've met. The outdoor community is filled with individuals from all walks of life - teachers, engineers, artists, retirees, students - and all levels of experience - from seasoned stewards and experienced adventurers to new hikers and first-time volunteers - who are brought together by a shared love of nature, each contributing in their own way. Giving back has deepened my appreciation not just for trails, but for all the unique people who travel them.

**Contribute by leaning into what you love.** If you enjoy hands-on work, try a trail work party. If you love sharing knowledge, consider helping with a field trip, leading a hike, or teaching a skill. If you have a knack for numbers, get involved





Clockwise from top left: Two partners on an early spring birding hike to Tenerife Falls. A Mountaineers group at Doughty Falls on Cougar Mountain's Whittaker Wilderness Loop. Smiling at the summit of West Tiger I.



on a committee as a treasurer. And if you're an introvert who loves words, consider writing trip reports or articles for The Mountaineers blog or magazine.

**Stewardship is a great way to learn.** Giving back is a two-way street: while I teach, guide, and share my decades of experience, I also learn – from the naturalist who points out mosses, the naturopath who discusses Ayurvedic medicine, or the novice hiker who reminds me what it's like to raise a precocious two-year-old. I signed up to give back because I wanted to meet people, but in the process, I gained new skills in leadership, trail maintenance, and group dynamics. Volunteering is as much about personal growth as it is about giving back. Identify where you want to develop more skills, then volunteer to acquire those skills.

**Even small actions make a difference.** Whether it's picking up trash, offering a word of encouragement to a participant, or teaching Leave No Trace principles to new hikers, stewardship inspires me to feel more responsible for the natural places where I recreate. My mindset has changed from "someone should do something about that" to "I can do something about that and teach others how to do the same."

**You can start anywhere.** If you're worried about looking silly, appearing uninformed, or making a mistake, know this: mistakes are the best way to learn. I used to fear making mistakes – what did I know about toppling trees or setting

up winches? I soon learned that The Mountaineers and WTA activities have numerous qualified and patient leaders eager to teach you everything. It's perfectly fine to be a complete novice. Put on your beginner's-mindset hat and have some fun!

## A new sense of purpose

Six months ago, I took a step into the world of stewardship and leadership. Now, I can't imagine my outdoor life without it. Beyond leading hikes and work parties, I'm looking ahead by helping expand educational programs for hikers, backpackers, and shoulder-season adventurers. The more I give, the more I want to contribute. The more I teach, the more I learn.

Stewardship extends beyond the trails, to my environment, family, clients, and community. In late March, my daughter and I visited my parents in North Carolina who were still recovering from the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. We spent a week helping in whatever way we could.

Giving back has made me a better hiker, a better leader, and a more engaged member of my family and my community. If there's one thing I've learned, it's that stewardship isn't just about maintaining trails or guiding people – it's about becoming part of something bigger. And once you step into that role, the possibilities are endless. ▲▲



# Financial Transparency at The Mountaineers

By Richard Heine, Director of Finance and Administration

At The Mountaineers, Adventure with Purpose is the unifying vision that connects our diverse programs, from outdoor education and conservation to publishing and philanthropy. While our vision is clear, the structure and programs that support it are broad and complex. As a nonprofit, we must balance mission-driven goals with financial sustainability. Because of this, we hold financial transparency essential to fostering understanding and trust within our community.

## Complex structures

Adventure with Purpose encapsulates what we do, how we do it, and why we do it. It reflects our belief that outdoor adventure should inspire deeper connections with nature and a shared responsibility to protect it. This purpose threads together our programming which spans a wide range of impact areas, delivered largely by a passionate volunteer community. With seven geographic branches and over 100 volunteer-led committees, we offer hundreds of courses and field trips each year. We also run robust youth programs, publish award-winning outdoor literature, and engage our community in efforts to safeguard public lands and ensure equitable access to the outdoors. Managing this breadth of work under one roof is both inspiring and complex.

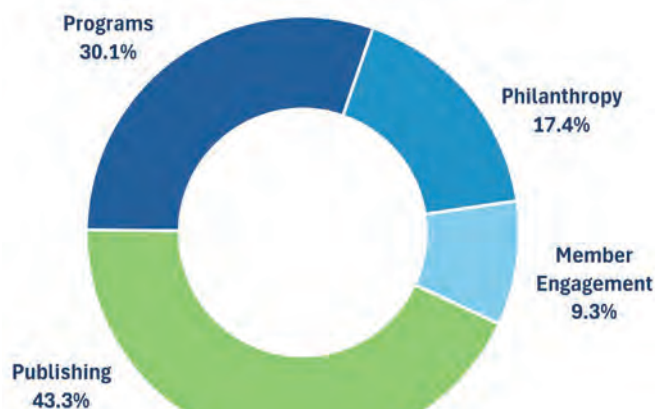
As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, we're able to accept charitable donations (expected to exceed \$2M in Fiscal Year 2025 (FY2025)) that support our mission. Financial planning and operations at The Mountaineers is intricate, involving multiple funding streams that encompass earned and contributed categories with myriad restrictions, reporting requirements, and timelines. Factors like limited resources, lean staffing, and the need to remain compliant with regulatory and tax requirements create a uniquely challenging environment that requires strategic and adaptive leadership. These programmatic and organizational complexities continue to color our approach to financial transparency.

## Financial transparency

Figures 1a and 1b provide a glimpse into the diversity of funding and spending areas in our FY2025 budget. It's worth noting that categories such as 'Programs' and 'Membership' span multiple components, including the activities of staff and volunteers alike. While our budget is \$11.53M, our margin (revenue less expenses) is only \$30K. This speaks to the level of complexity required in unifying and aligning our diverse programs with our nonprofit structure, and the role philanthropy can play to help us meet our objectives.

As a nonprofit dedicated to serving the community, we are committed to openly sharing how funds are raised, allocated, and spent. We do this by providing clear and accessible financial information, such as annual budgets, monthly reporting to staff and volunteers, audited financial

### FY2025 Budget Revenue - \$11.56M



FY2025 planned revenue does not include gifts received through bequests and for special projects

Figure 1a

### FY2025 Budget Expenses - \$11.53M

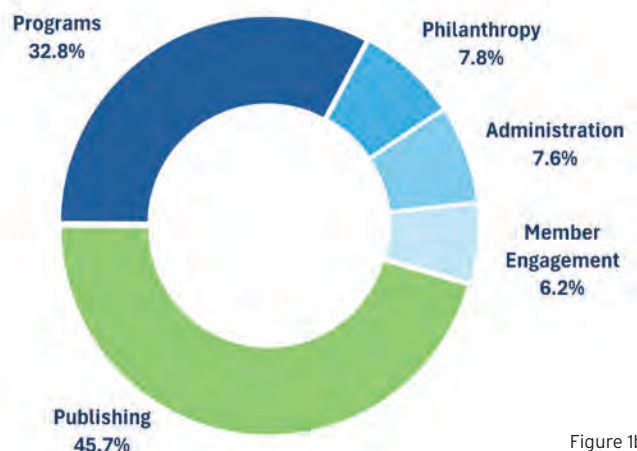


Figure 1b

statements, and tax returns. This transparency strengthens our relationship with supporters and reinforces our mission-driven approach, ensuring that every dollar contributes meaningfully to the impact we strive to make.

Figure 2 shows a side-by-side stacking of our revenue and expenses, revealing an essentially break-even budget. This figure also blends earned and contributed revenue (both restricted and unrestricted). These funding sources meet today's needs, highlighted on the expense side, and support our ability to operate and grow into the future. While figure 2 presents a more holistic picture, it does not show the full breadth of what we do.

## The value of unrestricted giving

While both restricted and unrestricted funding are vital to accomplishing the work of The Mountaineers, one of the strongest tools for meeting financial needs is unrestricted



giving. While project-specific and program-specific donations are essential, unrestricted funds give us the flexibility to respond to urgent needs, invest in long-term growth, and strengthen core operations. By giving without restrictions, you're not just supporting a single initiative, you're empowering the entire organization to thrive.

Unrestricted giving also makes the work of support staff possible. Our support staff plays a key role in advancing the success of our impact programs, from coordinating logistics to strategic planning to supporting members and volunteers. Staff helps recruit, train, and recognize volunteers, ensuring they feel valued and prepared; maintains the tools, systems, and spaces that make courses and events possible; and stewards the resources that keep programs sustainable. By handling these essential tasks, volunteers are empowered to focus on what they do best: teaching skills, leading trips, and building community.

Figure 3a provides more detail behind our FY2025 operating budget. Starting with expenses, the chart shows how resources were allocated as we prepared for what is now our current year. Of our \$11.53M budget, \$8.18M was direct program spending while \$3.35M was for staff support functions. This figure is intended to show costs in each area and does not reflect allocations made for the Statement of Functional Expenses as it appears in our audited financial statements and tax return/Form 990.

Figure 3b is a companion to the expense chart, showcasing revenue generated by each area. You'll notice the staff support functions also bring in revenue to support the overall organization. Philanthropy represents contributed revenue (donations and grants) while the rest are earned by the specific activities of that function. While the ratio between the sections is quite similar to expenses, it's important to note that funds cross between the two groups. A prime example is that while restricted contributions are reflected in philanthropy, they are utilized for programmatic activities such as scholarships, publishing, and conservation & advocacy.

Figures 3a and 3b further highlight the complex nature of our organization and illustrate the importance of flexible, unrestricted funding which provides the ability to direct resources where they are

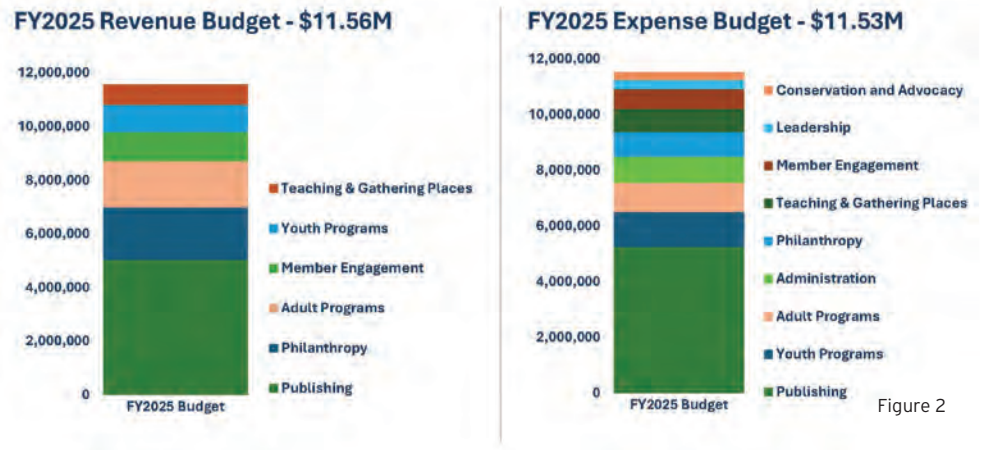


Figure 2

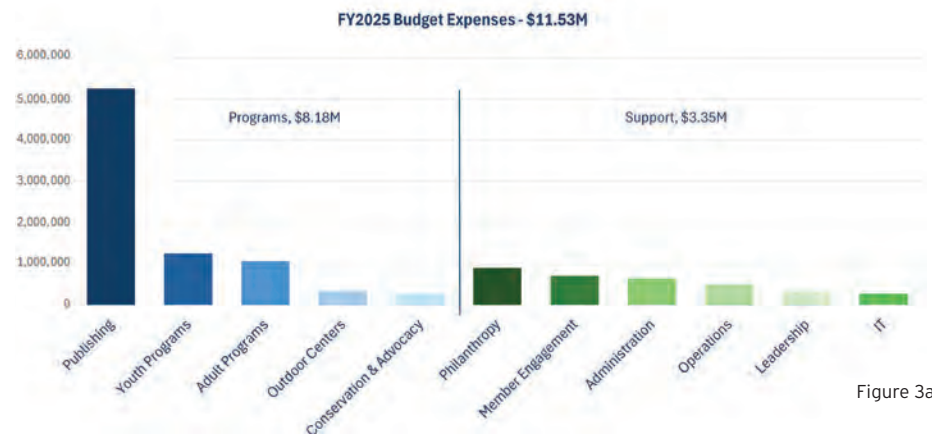


Figure 3a

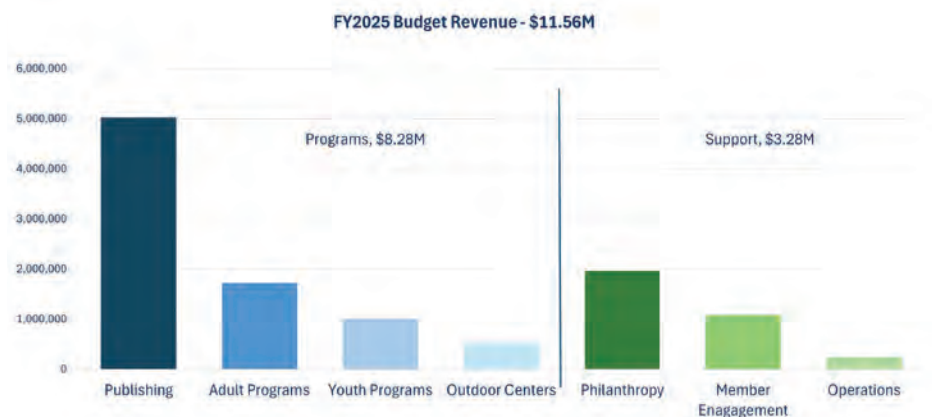


Figure 3b

needed most, which is key for a complex organization, with a complex structure operating in a dynamic world.

## Next steps

Our focus is on continuous improvement, and we'll look to use this, and other Impact Giving articles, as a foundation on which to increase transparency and build deeper understanding. If you'd like

to learn more, please join us for our State of the Organization virtual event on June 10, 2025: [mountaineers.org/state-of-the-org-june-2025](https://mountaineers.org/state-of-the-org-june-2025). ▲▲

To learn about our strategic plan, visit [mountaineers.org/AWP-strategic-plan](https://mountaineers.org/AWP-strategic-plan). To learn about finances at The Mountaineers, visit [mountaineers.org/financial](https://mountaineers.org/financial).



# What Drastic Cuts to the Federal Land Manager Workforce Mean for Washington's Public Lands

By Nathaniel Rees, Associate Manager of Policy and Planning

In the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument lost all but one of its recreation staff. Photo by Tim Nair.

**O**n my way home from work in February, I gave one of my colleagues at the Forest Service a ring. A wave of federal agency workforce cuts had just been announced, and while I knew the Forest Service was impacted, I had no idea how deeply. I won't forget my colleague's response when I asked about the extent of the layoffs. After a long pause, they said "...we'll only have a single person working in the Enchantments this summer."

Federal land management agencies have been chronically underfunded for decades, but February's cuts felt like a turning point as agency staff were reduced to unprecedented levels. At the administration's direction, the Forest Service fired 10% of its entire workforce, while the National Park Service cut 1,000 employees nationwide. In some areas, entire trail crews were eliminated.

The administration claimed these reductions would improve efficiency by eliminating unnecessary roles. In reality, these reductions cut the people directly responsible for the care of Washington's public lands. With uncertainty around rehiring these workers, as well as additional staff cuts expected, the future of the agency is unknown. Our national forests and parks will suffer as a result.

## Agency firings: The tip of the iceberg

Earlier this year, park rangers, trail crews, and maintenance staff were starting to prepare for the busy summer recreation season. But the administration's February federal workforce cuts - which included firing 125 Forest Service employees in Washington - halted much of that work before it could even begin.

The firings mainly targeted essential, on-the-ground staff who perform the daily operations that keep public lands safe, accessible, and thriving. These workers stock bathrooms, pack out improperly disposed human waste, empty trash bins, open campgrounds, clear downed trees, maintain thousands of miles of trails, and fight wildfires.

Before the February firings, the Forest Service was already short thousands of employees who they rely on to care for public lands. Due to a sweeping budget crisis, the agency made the decision not to hire seasonal or temporary workers in 2025. Meanwhile, the Park Service saw a 20% reduction in full-time staff over the last 15 years, even as visitation rose by 16% during the same period.

These agencies need more staff, not less. Yet as we head into the busy summer recreation season, both agencies' lean workforces will be stretched even thinner. The Forest Service in particular will face a nearly existential question: how can public lands be stewarded and visitation managed when so much of the recreation workforce has been lost?

## How will workforce reductions impact outdoor recreation?

With fewer staff, the Forest Service will have a harder time caring for our national forests. Trails may go unmaintained, recreation facilities like toilets may be closed to the public, and waste may go unremoved.

In the Enchantments - the most popular and fragile zone in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness - all but one member of the





Aasgard Pass in the Enchantments. In February, nearly the entire trail and wilderness crew responsible for protecting the Enchantments were fired by the administration. Photo by Luke Helgeson.

wilderness and trail crew was fired. Each season, these staff maintain 30 backcountry toilets and pack out 1,000 piles of improperly disposed human waste. Without these workers, maintenance tasks may fall on the shoulders of volunteers - or won't be done at all. Meanwhile, over 70% of recreation staff in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie Forest were fired in February, while the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest lost all but one of its recreation staff. The good news is that workers who help The Mountaineers obtain critical permits for our courses (special uses staff) were largely unaffected by the cuts.

The Park Service saw fewer workforce reductions and were even granted the ability to hire seasonal staff. But the chaos that has characterized the first few months of the administration - including a federal hiring freeze, agency workforce reductions, and plans to shutter national park offices - has delayed the Park Service's hiring schedule, which may impact the visitor experience this summer.

There is a lot that remains uncertain. In March alone, a pair of federal judges ruled that the Park Service and Forest Service had to reinstate fired employees. As a result of this ruling, many workers were rehired, only to be placed directly on administrative leave (meaning many of these employees were not allowed to do any work). Meanwhile, the administration asked the Supreme Court to block the judge's ruling to reinstate fired workers. With court battles for the fate of these employees far from settled, and with broader federal workforce cuts expected in the coming months, we anticipate that the status of our public lands, and the workers who steward them, may change between the time of writing this article and publication.

## How to support federal public lands

Since speaking with my Forest Service colleague, I've spent hours on the phone and in person with our agency partners. They've all shared a similar message: we're still here, and we're still protecting, stewarding, and managing our national forests and parks. Despite all the bad news, these people make me feel as though there's a bright future for our public lands.

The Mountaineers community gives me hope as well: our



A Forest Service ranger and Katherine Hollis, former Mountaineers Conservation & Advocacy Director, pose during a trail workday at the Liberty Bell group in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest in 2018. Volunteer trail work crews may need to fill the gaps left behind by a diminished federal workforce this summer. Photo by Peter Dunau.

members sent over 3,000 messages to Congress asking them to fight back against agency workforce cuts, and our staff has shared concerns with lawmakers and the media, including co-publishing an op-ed in the Seattle Times with Washington Trails Association. We'll continue to advocate with our partners for a fully funded and properly staffed Forest Service and Park Service. ▲▲

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

This summer, our public lands and the staff who steward them need all the support we can offer. Here's how you can help fill the gaps left behind by a diminished federal workforce:

- Be prepared for limited toilet facilities. Always bring a human waste disposal kit when you venture into the outdoors.
- If you see something that needs attention on public lands - an overflowing toilet, washed-out bridge, or brushy trail - document it by emailing [conservation@mountaineers.org](mailto:conservation@mountaineers.org). We'll use these examples to highlight the impacts of agency staff reductions when advocating for public lands funding with lawmakers.
- In addition to the Ten Essentials, bring an extra trash bag or two. Picking up trash is a small act that makes a big difference.
- Participate in a stewardship activity. Our public lands need some tender love and care.
- Take our Action Alert to speak up against agency firings: [mountaineers.org/agencyfirings\\_actionalert](https://mountaineers.org/agencyfirings_actionalert).
- If you see a Forest or Park Service ranger out on the trails, be sure to give them a BIG thank you!



The Mountaineers is a volunteer-led community built around sharing knowledge and skills to safely recreate outdoors. We offer courses, activities, and events every season, and members are encouraged to participate in programs offered by any branch.

### How to Sign Up for Activities

**Step 1**  
Visit our website  
**mountaineers.org**  
Click on the big green 'Find Activities' button, or hover over the 'Activities' tab and choose 'Find Activities.'

**Step 2**  
Filter your search  
Define your search using the filter options in the green column on the left. To view activities by location, choose 'Map' in the upper right.

**Step 3**  
Register  
Click on the activity of your interest to learn more. If you like what you see, select the orange 'Register' button. You'll be added to the trip roster and receive a confirmation email.

*Note: Activities require registration unless otherwise noted. You will also need a current waiver on file with The Mountaineers to participate.*

### How to Sign Up for Events

**Step 1**  
Visit our website  
**mountaineers.org**  
Click on the 'Upcoming Events' button on the left of the main page, or click 'More' and choose the 'Events' tab.

**Step 2**  
Browse for local events  
Scroll down to view our most popular events, or choose a branch or program center calendar for more events in your area. Browse through your options, and click on an event to learn more.

**Step 3**  
Select an event & register  
Many events are free but require you to RSVP via the orange RSVP button. Events that require tickets will have a link for online ticket purchases.

### How to Sign Up for Courses & Clinics

**Step 1**  
Visit our website  
**mountaineers.org**  
Click on the big green 'Find Courses' button, or hover over the 'Courses' tab and choose 'Find Courses.'

**Step 2**  
Filter your course search  
Define your search using the filter options. You can also search key words in the left hand course search bar, or at the top of our webpage.

**Step 3**  
Select a course & register  
Read the course overview to learn more about course objectives and expectations. Once you register, you will receive a confirmation email.

*Note: Most courses require that you register a few months before the course start date.*

### Virtual Education Center

Check out our Virtual Education Center and Calendar, your home base for accessing all our virtual learning tools. Find online activities, events, and classes, and browse our educational resources for outdoor tips and skills. Visit [mountaineers.org/courses/virtual-education-center](https://mountaineers.org/courses/virtual-education-center) to learn more.

### Volunteer With Us

Interested in helping others find community and safely enjoy the natural world? There are many ways to get involved as a volunteer, such as instructing a course, hosting at one of our lodges, or helping at an event. Reach out to your branch chair to learn more about volunteering with The Mountaineers, or visit [mountaineers.org/volunteerwithus](https://mountaineers.org/volunteerwithus).



## Frequently Asked Questions

**What if I'm not a member?** Our courses and activities are open to the public. You simply need to sign up for a guest membership at [mountaineers.org/join](https://mountaineers.org/join). Guests can participate in two activities for free before joining, and unlimited courses at a higher course cost.

**What are some easy ways to get started?** Sign up for an activity without prerequisites. These include day hikes, backpacking trips, stewardship activities, photography outings, and occasional sailing opportunities. Also, consider taking a basic or introductory course like Basic Snowshoeing, Introduction to Rock Climbing, or Navigation.

**How are events and activities different?** Activities are primarily day-long outings that require participants to use skills in an outdoor setting. Examples include hikes, naturalist walks, or snowshoeing. Events are primarily opportunities to see presentations and socialize. Examples include summer picnics, branch banquets, and speaker series like BeWild and the Adventure Speaker Series.

**What if I don't meet the prerequisites for an activity?** Some of our technical activities have prerequisite skill requirements. If you want to learn the prerequisite skills, we encourage you to take one of our courses. If you already have the prerequisite skills, you might qualify for equivalency. Email [info@mountaineers.org](mailto:info@mountaineers.org) and we will help you apply for equivalency so you can participate at the appropriate skill level.

**Why do some activities say 'Leader Permission Required'?** All our Mountaineers activities are led by volunteers. To ensure everyone on a trip has a set of specific skills, some volunteers require you to contact them in advance to participate. Before signing up for a trip that requires leader permission, please contact the leader. For any questions, email our Member Services team at [info@mountaineers.org](mailto:info@mountaineers.org).

**What if the course or activity is full?** Sign up for the waitlist! Yes, it works. We have roughly a 10-20% drop-out rate in courses and activities, so spots often become available.

## Course Calendar Overview

Updated May 2024

Please visit [mountaineers.org](https://mountaineers.org) to see current course listings and to sign up.

Course selection varies by branch. Registration usually opens 1-3 months prior to the start of the course.





The Mountaineers is home to seven branches, each offering a number of courses and seminars. Our branches also host a variety of events like picnics, film screenings, and guest speakers. Regardless of which branch you join, you can sign up for offerings with any branch. Learn more at [mountaineers.org/locations-lodges](https://mountaineers.org/locations-lodges).



## BELLINGHAM

**Chair:** AJ Schuehle, [ajschuehle@hotmail.com](mailto:ajschuehle@hotmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/bellingham](https://mountaineers.org/bellingham); [bellinghammountaineers.com](https://bellinghammountaineers.com)

You'll find the Bellingham Branch tucked alongside the upper craggy expanse of the North Cascades. We enjoy easy access to the peaks that drain into the Nooksack and Skagit River basins. Our close-knit community offers climbing courses, hiking trips, and backcountry adventures in a diverse, inclusive, and supportive environment.

**Branch Council Meetings** are on the fourth Tuesday of each month. Visit our branch calendar for details.

## EVERETT

**Chair:** Nick Mayo, [nicholas.e.mayo@gmail.com](mailto:nicholas.e.mayo@gmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/everett](https://mountaineers.org/everett)

Founded in 1911, the Everett Branch offers several programs. As a smaller branch, we value companionship and are excited to meet new members at our in-person events including our Spring Happy Hour, Beer & Gear evening, Annual Awards Banquet, and more. Check our branch calendar for details. Our branch is also known for our unique Lookout and Trail Maintenance Committee, which restored the Mt. Pilchuck Lookout

and continues to maintain the historic Three Fingers Lookout.

**Branch Council Meetings** are held every other month to discuss new and ongoing initiatives and are open to all. We host a combination of hybrid and fully remote meetings depending on the month. As we ramp up our in-person events and programs, we are looking for talented and passionate volunteers to make an impact. Please reach out to Nick Mayo for details.

## KITSAP

**Chair:** Melissa White, [melissa.white@gmail.com](mailto:melissa.white@gmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/kitsap](https://mountaineers.org/kitsap)

The Kitsap Branch draws members from throughout western Puget Sound, from Gig Harbor to the Olympic Peninsula, including Pierce, Kitsap, Jefferson, and Clallam counties. Join us at our program center, conveniently located in Bremerton.

**Branch Council Meetings** are held in January, April, July, and October. Our annual branch celebration is in December, please join us!

## SEATTLE

**Chair:** Craig Kartes, [c.kartes@outlook.com](mailto:c.kartes@outlook.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/seattle](https://mountaineers.org/seattle)

The Seattle Branch began as the sole club location in 1906 when The Mountaineers was founded. Our Meet The Mountaineers open houses are held about once a month and are a great way for new and prospective members to learn about our many offerings. Our branch is also home to the Seattle Program Center, which features a bookstore, indoor and outdoor climbing walls, friction slabs, event spaces, and more.

**Branch Council Meetings** are held every other month to discuss new and ongoing initiatives. We're growing rapidly and actively seeking people to support our community. Visit our branch calendar for details and reach out to the branch chair if you are interested in volunteering.

## FOOTHILLS (I-90/I-405 CORRIDORS)

**Chair:** Travis Vermeer, [travisvermeer@gmail.com](mailto:travisvermeer@gmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/foothills](https://mountaineers.org/foothills)

The Foothills Branch is the club's newest branch, founded in 2004 and encompassing the eastside communities along the I-90 and

I-405 corridors. In addition to our educational and activity programs, we host film screenings, guest speakers, and stewardship events with the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, Shadow Lake Nature Preserve, WTA, and other conservation-minded partners.

Our branch is growing rapidly, and we are actively seeking people to support our community - no prior experience required. We invite you to get involved in branch leadership and committees to get our communities outside. Contact the branch chair if you might be interested.

**Branch Council Meetings** are held every other month (except summer) to discuss new and ongoing initiatives. All branch members are welcome! Visit our branch calendar for details.

## TACOMA

**Chair:** Natalia Martinez-Paz, [nataliamp@gmail.com](mailto:nataliamp@gmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/tacoma](https://mountaineers.org/tacoma)

The second largest of all seven branches, the Tacoma branch maintains its own program center in the Old Town neighborhood of Tacoma, as well as the Irish Cabin property located near Mt. Rainier. A great way get involved is our Meet The Mountaineers event, consisting of a meet-and-greet and a 90-minute interactive presentation giving you opportunities to learn about our history, our website, and how you can get involved.

**Branch Council Meetings** are held every six weeks to discuss new and ongoing initiatives and general branch business. Visit our branch calendar for details.

## OLYMPIA

**Chair:** Bob Keranen, [bobkeranen@gmail.com](mailto:bobkeranen@gmail.com)

**Website:** [mountaineers.org/Olympia](https://mountaineers.org/Olympia)

**The Adventure Speaker Series** returns on November 5 and continues on the first Wednesday of the month through March.

**Branch Council Meetings** are held at 6:00 PM on the second Wednesday of the month, alternating in-person and Zoom, though Zoom is always available. Members are encouraged to attend. Contact Bob Keranen for details.

## Get Involved With Your Branch

### Visit Your Branch Page

Go to [mountaineers.org](https://mountaineers.org) and click on 'More' in the top menu; then click 'Locations & Lodges' and select your branch from the dropdown options. On your branch home page, you'll find branch news, upcoming events, contact info, and more.

### Sign up for Branch News

Branch eNewsletters are a great way to stay up to date. To opt in to these emails, update your Notification Preferences in your online profile.



Open to Mountaineers members and the general public, our lodges provide visitors with unparalleled access to skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, and more. The Mountaineers is also home to the Kitsap Forest Theater, a historic outdoor theater showcasing two musical productions a year which are open to the public and a family favorite.

**LODGE WEBPAGES** Information about schedules, availability, meals, group rentals, and special events can all be found on the lodge webpages. You can also book your stay online. To access our lodge webpages, visit the direct links listed below or go to [mountaineers.org](http://mountaineers.org), click on 'More' in the top menu, and then click on 'Locations & Lodges' in the dropdown menu.

**VOLUNTEER** Our lodges and the Kitsap Forest Theater are run by dedicated volunteers, and they can use your help! Visit their webpages to learn how you can contribute to the teams that keep our outdoor centers running.



## Baker Lodge

[mountaineers.org/bakerlodge](http://mountaineers.org/bakerlodge)

Mt. Baker Lodge, above Picture Lake and near Artist's Point in the North Cascades, is a gorgeous place for a getaway. The lodge is located within walking distance of the Mt. Baker ski area as well as numerous hiking trails.

## Stevens Lodge

[mountaineers.org/stevenslodge](http://mountaineers.org/stevenslodge)

Tired of the hustle and bustle of the big city? Come for a relaxing getaway in a cabin in the woods. Ski, ride, and explore from our lodge, a short drive from Seattle. Nestled next to the Stevens Pass Ski Area, our ski-in/ski-out lodge is open during the Stevens Pass Ski area's official season.



## Meany Lodge

[mountaineers.org/meanylodge](http://mountaineers.org/meanylodge)

Meany Lodge is The Mountaineers oldest winter sports resort, located approximately 60 miles east from Seattle off I-90 near Stampede Pass and surrounded by the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Meany Lodge provides a warm family environment for all - perfect for winter and summer adventures alike. During the ski season, the lodge operates a rope-tow on our ski hill for ski lessons, cross-country skiing, and snowshoe excursions.

## Kitsap Forest Theater

[foresttheater.com](http://foresttheater.com)

We're thrilled to announce our enchanting 2025 season with three shows! Be swept away by the boundless imagination and storytelling of two lively and funny musicals: *Annie* and *Big Fish*, plus Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. These mesmerizing, family-friendly shows promise to light up hearts of all ages, and what better way to experience them than at the Kitsap Forest Theater. More information, including tickets and audition dates, can be found on our website. Tickets make great gifts - consider buying season tickets! We also have volunteer opportunities and offer summer camps for kids.





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