

## **IGBC Information & Education**

### **Pasayten Wilderness Bear Ranger**

#### **2016 Project Report**

The Interagency Grizzly Bear Information and Education Committee awarded \$3000 to the Methow Valley Ranger District, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest to fund a *Pasayten Wilderness Bear Ranger* program. The Pasayten Wilderness is in the heart of the North Cascades Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone and 25-30% of the total visitor use for this wilderness occurs during the month of September. Approximately 500 Pacific Crest Trail “through hikers” come through the Pasayten in the month of September on the final leg of their 2650 mile, cross-country trek, and a majority of the stock-based use of the wilderness occurs in September during the “high hunt” for mule deer offered by the Washington State Department of Wildlife (WDFW).

We used the IGBC I&E grant to fund a Personal Services Agreement for Alex Stoll. Alex had volunteered as a Forest Service climbing ranger for us all summer; thus, he had good knowledge of the trail system in the Pasayten Wilderness, the skills and equipment necessary to backpack for multiple-day outings, and the personality for interacting with Forest visitors. In addition, we used the grant to fund several days for our 3 existing wilderness rangers in order to increase the FS presence in the Pasayten Wilderness during the high hunt.

We partnered with Scott Fitkin, Area Wildlife Biologist for the WDFW, who helped with training of Forest Service wilderness rangers and Alex Stoll and participated on a Pasayten Wilderness trip in September. All were briefed on the use of bear-resistant panniers, solar-powered electric fence packages designed for the backcountry, backpacker animal-resistant food containers, and food/garbage hanging techniques. They were also briefed on the purpose of the North Cascades Grizzly Bear Restoration Project and the status of the Environmental Impact Statement currently being completed by the National Park Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Forest Service, and WDFW.

Alex Stoll completed two 6-day backpacking trips; one in high-use hunting areas during the high hunt, and one along the Pacific Crest trail in late September. He carried a bear-resistant backpacker food container for demonstration purposes and also demonstrated proper food/garbage hanging techniques. Alex made contact with 18 parties during the high hunt and made contact with 116 parties in his 6 days on the Pacific Crest Trail. Our Forest Service wilderness rangers packed in during the high hunt with pack mules and saddle horses and took bear-resistant panniers and a solar-powered electric fence package for demonstrations. During the high hunt we had wilderness rangers in every major drainage of the Pasayten Wilderness for the first time in years. Wilderness rangers provided education to the public and enforced regulations when needed. In addition to providing information to the public, the rangers were able to identify and correct several issues including improper food storage, sanitation problems, illegal chainsaw use, and resource damage in the wilderness.

The ability to have increased ranger patrols in September in the Pasayten Wilderness greatly helped protect the overall wilderness resource, and allowed us to reach hundreds of people regarding grizzly bear restoration and proper food storage for bears.

**John Rohrer and Amber Deming**  
**October 2016**



Figure 1. Methow Valley Ranger District Wilderness Ranger providing information to the public on the Pacific Crest Trail.



Figure 2. Methow Valley Ranger District stock ranger patrol in the Pasayten Wilderness near Harts Pass, September 2016.