

## s e c t i o n c

**PURPOSE AND NEED*****Purpose***

**T**he Ice Age Floods Alternatives Study brings together professional geologists, public lands managers, representatives of the travel and tourism industry, academics, planners and the interested public to identify, discuss and recommend various approaches for managing and interpreting the great Ice Age Floods. The purpose of the *Study of Alternatives* is to identify a series of viable management options for the Director of the National Park Service. The NPS Director will submit to the Secretary of

the Interior a recommendation for management and interpretation of the Ice Age Floods story based on the *Study of Alternatives*. In turn, the Secretary of the Interior will forward the Study to the Congress for consideration.

***Need***

The region lacks a coordinated interpretive approach to the Ice Age Floods story. The understanding and appreciation of the Ice Age Floods is a relatively recent phenomenon. As recently as the 1960s, not all geologists accepted the hypothesis of catastrophic Ice Age flooding in the Pacific

Northwest. It took decades for the geologic community to accept the hypothesis of J Harlen Bretz, who was instrumental in proposing the idea of catastrophic flooding. In 1979 the Geological Society of America awarded Bretz the Penrose Medal, the nation's highest geological award. In 1986, John Allen and Marjorie Burns published *Cataclysms on the Columbia*, which sparked a wave of public interest in the Floods. In 1994 a video of the Floods was developed by the Washington State University Landscape Architecture program in cooperation with the National Park Service, and a year later



NPS Photo

*Lower Moses Coulee, Washington*



the *Smithsonian* magazine featured an article by Michael Parfit on the Floods. In 1998 Oregon Public Broadcasting produced a video program on the Floods, and public awareness of the Floods increased dramatically.

During this same period, tourism—especially “cultural tourism”—was growing at a rapid rate in the Pacific Northwest. The income from increasing tourism helped offset economic losses that were occurring in some parts of the region from reduced timber and mining activities. The visible remnants of the

Floods are on such a large scale and found at so many different sites that change has not dramatically affected them, but as the area continues to develop the region will experience accelerated changes. These changes may affect flood features. At the present time, there is an opportunity to develop a cooperative effort to educate the public about the Ice Age Floods, to contribute to existing cultural tourism programs in Montana, Idaho, Washington and Oregon, and to develop a better understanding and appreciation of the remaining resources from the greatest documented floods on earth.