



Bob Mierendorf  
Park Archeologist

When Congress established North Cascades National Park in 1968 the enabling legislation acknowledged, of course, the fantastic scenery and the wilderness values. They weren't thinking deeply or perhaps it wasn't even on their radar that large, natural, scenic parks like North Cascades actually have a very significant and important and cultural resource base within them.

I'm Bob Mierendorf, the park archeologist here at North Cascades National Park Service Complex. I started doing archeology here in the park in 1984. The archeological research in this park has basically contributed what previously has been an unknown aspect of northwest coast life, traditional life. And that is that there are important traditional use areas within a place like North Cascades that are unrelated to salt water or to the lowlands. So work here in the park is really adding new information about Salish adaptations to the Pacific Northwest. . . very much the mountain component that has been left out of almost all previous studies of the northwest coast.

Another discovery is that passes across the hydrologic divide of the Cascades, meaning passes right on the crest of the Cascade Range, have been used for at least 9,600 radio carbon years. Our work at Cascade Pass has shown this great a time depth so that Cascade Pass is the only well-dated, multi-component archeological site in the subalpine and alpine in the Cascade Range. It's the oldest micro-blade site dated in Washington State and so far to my knowledge, and I'm still investigating this, it's the oldest dated archeological site, in the subalpine and alpine, anywhere in the Cascade Range, the Olympics, the Sierras and the coast range of BC.

Well every place that I go to in the park at one point or another I begin to think that this is one of my favorite places, and it is. But every time I get to a new place in the park, I have to add that to the list. So the list is never ending. And the biggest disappointment to me in that regard is that realizing that I will not get to visit and look at and examine the entire 684,000 acres of the park. It's just that big and there is so much that is going on. . . I just will not be able to see the entire park.

*Interview conducted and edited by Michael Liang, Visual Information Specialist.  
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