



Dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the Klickitat Trail

## Trail Progress Report

### \$240,000 secured for development

By Dan Harkenrider, Forest Service Area Manager

Thanks to a lot of hard work by KTC, Washington State Parks and the Forest Service, the vision of the Klickitat Rail Trail is becoming a reality. As many of you know, the last significant barrier was surmounted when the Surface Transportation Board (STB) denied the claim that the rail line was severed from the Burlington Northern mainline and thereby did not meet the requirements of a rails to trail. Still, there is much work to accomplish before work can start, such as obtaining County permits, designing major trail features and securing funds to complete the project. But the outlook does appear bright!

As a result of the STB decision, I'm happy to report that our office was able to secure \$240,000 of Forest Service trail capital investment funds. Our plans for the funds are to award a contract to design the decking and handrails for the Fisher Hill Trestle. We have decided to move forward with concrete decking. To our surprise, the estimated cost difference between wood and concrete was not significant. In the long run the concrete decking will reduce our maintenance cost and be friendlier to horses. We hope to award a contract to install the decking next spring. We also plan to secure materials to surface the very rough and heavy ballast areas, fix washout areas and build a board walk. A sign plan will be completed with the emphasis on acquiring signs for public safety, river access points and trail etiquette.

As you know, \$240,000 is not nearly enough to complete the project. Likely, it will not be enough to purchase all of the boardwalk and surfacing material for the Fisher Hill to Pitt section. However it is a good start!

We are also moving ahead on trailhead planning. I am very optimistic that we will be able to construct the Lyle trailhead in 2007. We are indeed headed in a positive direction!

The Forest Service and Washington State Parks have been working together to develop a master agreement which will further define our roles and responsibilities. The Klickitat Rail Trail project will continue to be a true partnership between these two agencies and the Klickitat Trail Conservancy. I am confident that we can take advantage of our collective resources and strengths to not only develop, but to maintain and operate the trail for the benefit of the public.

I want to pass along my appreciation for KTC's efforts and support. This organization is essential to moving this "long time in coming" project to fruition. I trust KTC will continue to play an integral part in implementing and fulfilling the vision of the trail.



The Forest Service will award a contract to design the deck and handrails for the Fisher Hill Trestle, as well as install the decking, in spring of 2006. The Fisher Hill Trestle, located 1.7 miles in from the Lyle trailhead, is the first of several historic railroad trestles on the Klickitat Trail. Once renovations are complete, the trestle will take hikers and bikers safely across the Klickitat River. Photo: P. Essley

## Legal Challenge Update

### Trail Opponents' Petition Denied!

This past spring, the Klickitat Trail was hit with a serious legal challenge. Six trail opponents petitioned the federal Surface Transportation Board (formerly the Interstate Commerce Commission), asking that the rail-banked status of the Klickitat Trail be revoked, thereby completely closing the trail. Opponents claimed the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad's sales of land in Lyle had disconnected the 31 rail-banked miles of the Klickitat Trail from the BNSF mainline, effectively making the rail-banking invalid. That such a disconnection would invalidate an otherwise properly rail-banked trail has yet to be fully tested in court. The Klickitat Trail Conservancy (KTC) was not interested in our trail becoming a test case for this legal question. Rather, KTC went into high gear to determine whether or not severance had in fact occurred.

Fortunately, it was determined that trail opponents were relying on incorrect information, most notably an inaccurate county assessor's

map. Research revealed that there is no disconnection of the trail from the main BNSF line running through Lyle.

BNSF also submitted a thorough response to the Petition, with exactly the same conclusion.

To be doubly protected, and to provide insurance for the future, KTC also purchased an easement across a property in Lyle that provides a further connection between the trail and the mail line.

The STB denied the petition quickly, clearly and emphatically. To quote their response document, "...the petitioners have failed to provide reliable evidence to support their claims of severance or an intent by either party to terminate interim trail use and abandon the line. To the contrary, both BNSF and the Trail Owners have provided evidence that BNSF specifically retains a connection between the trail and its main line so as to allow for the potential reactivation of active rail service on this rail banked right-of-way, and that KTC has obtained an easement connecting the trail to the national rail system, which encompasses right for rail reactivation in the event active rail service on the line is restored. Thus, we cannot find on the record before us that this trail has been severed from the interstate rail network.

Continued on page 2

# Trail Voices ... notes and letters

## Small Works Add Up To Big Results

By Jim Denton, KTC Works Committee Chair

One of the best ways that KTC members and other hikers and bikers can help develop and maintain the Klickitat Trail is as simple as tossing a stick or rolling a rock. The aggregate power of hundreds of trail users is absolutely incredible. Think of how much time each trail user spends on the trail in a given year and then figure out how much trail work could be done if each person spent five percent of his trail time doing trail maintenance.

This actually happens all the time, and is one of the primary reasons much of the trail improvement has occurred over the last three years. Many unseen people regularly lop branches, clear downed trees, and pitch aside those omnipresent rocks that are forever rolling down from the hillsides. They also pull hundreds, if not thousands, of invasive and noxious weeds each year.

The KTC Works Committee gets out on the trail several times each month during good weather. But with winter damage and the rapid growth of spring vegetation, it is hard to keep up with the maintenance needs of 31 miles of trail. Trail users have and will continue to shoulder much of the work on the trail.

Particular thanks go out to Henry and Peggy Lenke who use the trail south of Wahkiacus on a daily basis. Parts of this wild section of trail were so heavily overgrown three years ago that it seemed impossible that a footpath could be pioneered through the brush, while in other places the old rail bed resembled more of a boulder field than a footpath. Today the accumulative effect of few minutes of daily work by the Lenkes is apparent; a pleasant footpath wends its way from Wahkiacus to the location of the washed away bridge at Suburbia.

Trail users are also the best eyes we have. One user or another sees virtually every section of open trail each week, whereas an official member of our Works Committee may skip over a section of trail for months because he believes that everything is okay there. When a trail user sees a downed log, recent rock fall, or other obstacle which hinders trail use they should contact to KTC to have maintenance done.

### Legal Challenge, continued from page 1

*Petitioners bear the burden to support reopening [the case], but have provided no basis for granting the relief they seek. Therefore, their petition will be denied."*

Supportive trail groups greatly appreciate the speedy nature of this decision, because the US Forest Service had \$240,000 for the Klickitat Trail in this year's budget. The Forest Service could not allocate these dollars until the question of severance was settled. With the favorable decision, and some quick work on the part of USFS, those funds can now be used toward improvements on the trail.

The pro bono work of attorney Charles Montange was pivotal to the successful defeat of this trail challenge. Charles, a long-time friend of the Klickitat Trail, produced an excellent, comprehensive and succinct 80 page response in the very short 20 day time frame allowed. Several members of KTC's Board of Directors also contributed many hours of intense and inspired work to meet the deadline. It was a great team effort with very satisfying results!

## Klickitat Trail History

Residents recall the area's history and the railroad

*In 1897, on a train trip to Portland, Oregon, Al Stearns was chatting with a fellow passenger about homesteading and raising cattle. The passenger recommended the area around Klickitat, WA. Afterwards, Mr. Stearns investigated the land along the Klickitat River and liked what he found. The Stearns eventually bought land just down river from the town of Klickitat.*

Today, historic structures still exist on that property. Helen and Frank Knopp purchased one of the buildings in 1951 for \$2,500.



*Pictured here are Jim Vogt and his sister Helen Knopp. They both reside along the Klickitat Trail, on what was once the Stearns' Homestead.*

Photo: C. Steindorf

The Knopp home once served as a store, and was the first train depot.

The back door of the Knopp home is 30 feet from the trail. Helen remembers, "The first night I was sleeping when the train went by. I shot

straight up in bed. But, I did get used to it after a while." The train would deliver cream to the store from the farms at Pitt and then take the fruit from the Stearns' orchards back down the river.

Helen quietly admits to skipping school one day and taking the train to Goldendale to have some fun. Jim Vogt, Helen's brother, remembers riding the train to Goldendale to see the dentist.

Jim will soon be residing in the old cabin by the trail. He is a wonderful source of Klickitat history. Please say "Hi" if you happen to see him as you hike by his trail-side home.



*Jim Vogt's cabin, right along side the Klickitat Trail.*

Photo: C. Steindorf

## Another good day on the trail....



The railroad trestle bridge at Harms Road received some recent attention and repair. A KTC work party placed a boardwalk across the trestle, making walking and biking over it easier and safer. Area hikers and riders took immediate notice. Photo by B. Robinson



This year, dedicated KTC volunteers were recognized for their superior efforts along the trail. Barbara Robinson (seated), outgoing Works Committee Chair, holds the Volunteer Recognition Award presented by Washington State Parks. Pictured here on a work-party day are (left to right) Joe Kelsey, Dave Berger, Dan Lichtenwald, Ted Anderson, Barbara Robinson, Jim Denton & Gene Huse. Jim Denton is currently the new Works Chair. He is busy on new projects, and would love to have you attend one of his "parties".

Photo: Bev Linde

## KTC Fall 2005 Calendar of Events

The following are KTC scheduled events. Everyone is welcome! Please visit [www.klickitat-trail.org](http://www.klickitat-trail.org) for more details, schedule changes, maps and trailhead locations.

Pets and smoking are not allowed on KTC sponsored hikes. Stay on the trail at all times!

The **Lyle trailhead** is located on the west end of Lyle, WA on SR 14, across from Greg Colt Realty.

The **Klickitat railroad park** is located in the town of Klickitat, one block south of the of the gas station.

### Saturday, September 3

Hike Pitt to Fisher Hill Bridge.

Eight mile hike along the Klickitat River. Meet at 9 a.m. at the **Lyle Trailhead**, just across the street from Greg Colt Realty at the west end of town. We meet early to beat the heat. Bring water, lunch, a hat and wear sturdy shoes.

### Sunday, September 25

Work Party to remove brush from the base of the trestles in Swale Canyon. Meet at 10am at the **Lyle Trailhead**.

### Saturday, October 1

KTC Annual Dog Hike.

6 mile, round-trip hike from Wahkiacus to Suburbia.

While KTC does not usually allow dogs on its events, we like to have a hike specifically for dog owners to bring their pals along. Your pet must be leashed, owners must pick up after their dogs. This is a pretty hike along the Klickitat River, through a special wildlife management area. Meet at the **Lyle Trailhead** at 10 a.m. or Wahkiacus at 10:45 a.m.

### Sunday, October 16

Work Party. Meet at the **Lyle Trailhead** at 10 a.m.

### Saturday, November 5

Hike the 13 mile, remote Swale Canyon. Meet at the **Lyle Trailhead** at 9 a.m. We meet early because car shuttles must be set up. Bring plenty of water, food and extra clothes. We will return to the cars by 5 p.m.

### Sunday, November 20

Work Party. Meet at the **Lyle Trailhead** at 10 a.m.

**Klickitat Trail Conservancy**  
**PO Box 512**  
**Lyle, WA 98635**  
**info@klickitat-trail.org**  
**www.klickitat-trail.org**

The Mission of the Klickitat Trail Conservancy is to preserve and promote the public use of the 31 mile Klickitat Trail as a recreational, cultural, natural, educational, and economic asset of Klickitat County.

Members strongly support the purposes, goals, and objectives of the Klickitat Trail Conservancy.

Trail Notes is a bi-annual publication of the Klickitat Trail Conservancy. Submissions are welcome. Articles, pictures and comments can be sent to: PO Box 512, Lyle, WA 98635 or info@klickitat-trail.org.

Editor: Lisa Conway

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**Klickitat Trail Conservancy**  
**PO Box 512**  
**Lyle, WA 98635**

**YES!** You can count on my **ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP** to help preserve and promote the public use of the Klickitat Trail!  
As a member, I strongly support the purposes, goals and objectives of the Klickitat Trail Conservancy.

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>\$25 (standard)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>\$250</b>	<b>Please mail to:</b> <b>KTC</b> <b>PO Box 512</b> <b>Lyle, WA 98635</b>
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<input type="checkbox"/> <b>\$100</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>\$_____</b>	

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Add me to the KTC listserv, an email list for sharing timely information about the trail, including hike updates, work party information, fresh news, and events.

I am interested in volunteering for trail work.

I am interested in being more involved in the KTC organization in the following areas:

**Comments?**

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