

KLICKITAT
TRAIL
CONSERVANCY



December 2016

Dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the Klickitat Trail

Dear KTC Members and Supporters,

2016 was a *fantastic* year for the Klickitat Trail! Several key projects were completed and others continue to flourish. As a volunteer organization, we are blessed with intelligent and engaged members who have dedicated untold hours to the preservation and promotion of the trail. In October, we warmly welcomed two new members to the KTC Board of Directors, Lynda Esaacson and Erik Engelke.

The economic value of our rail-trail is real. As the trail prospers, so do the small businesses in the little communities along the way. Recently, KTC appeared before the Klickitat County Board of Commissioners with two key messages: rail-trails *are* economic engines (e.g. Idaho's Hiawatha Trail) and continued trail improvement and fully connecting our 31-mile trail will mutually benefit the county and trail communities.

Our biggest news involves the Mitchell Property, donated to KTC by Irvin Mitchell in May 2015. For over a year, enormous quantities of energy and resources were channeled to clean up this heavily impacted property in hopes that Washington State Parks (WASP) would assume ownership and it would become a part of the trail.

This endeavor became a reality on October 24, 2016 when WASP assumed full ownership and management of this beautiful trailside property.

There is now a picnic table in a lovely spot under the oaks and a memorial bench, in Mitch's honor, will welcome visitors at the river viewpoint. We know that this section of the trail, which has access to a little sandy beach, will become even lovelier as the native wildflowers flourish. Andy Kallinan, WASP ranger notes that, "*The Mitchell property donation is a nice addition for our parks. It is a great turn around point for the community of Klickitat and creates connectivity for the adjacent fish and wildlife property.*"

We received a wonderful surprise this summer when an old (2014) WASP grant request was retroactively awarded. This grant is for decking trestles and gravelling the trail through the 13-mile Swale Canyon, to be completed in 2019. Meanwhile, thanks to a grant from Columbia Gorge Environmental Foundation, our local WASP office can replace bad trestle ties in Swale Canyon as a temporary fix, so hiking Swale has already become safer and easier.

KTC's highest strategic priority is to see the trail become a fully connected hiking, biking, and riding corridor. We are leading an effort to secure a grant to fix the one-mile disconnect between Klickitat and Suburbia. This would replace the trestle over the river. Irvin Mitchell's estate money, which he left to the national Rails-to-Trails organization to benefit the Klickitat Trail, is being offered as a match for that grant. Grant determination will be announced in the spring of 2017.

The 2016 *Klickitat Trail Run* was a tremendous success, with 153 runners and 48 community volunteers coming together for this event, which included both a half, full marathon and 5K walk/run. Thanks to race organizer and KTC Board Member Lynda Esaacson for her commitment to our community and the trail! Mark your calendars for next year's run (first Sunday in November).

KTC continues organizing work parties to maintain the trail as usual, but is reducing KTC sponsored hiking to only a few annual cooperative events. Please contact us if you would like us to help you organize a group hike. A spring hiking schedule will be distributed and our website always has up-to-date information.

Equestrian use on the trail has increased, but we would like to caution that Swale Canyon is not yet ready for horses due to unsafe trestles. When the Swale project is completed, horse use should be possible. Right now, a nice ride is from Pitt (easy parking) to the Fisher Hill Trestle; there are no trestles for over 8 miles and the road is on the other side of the river. From Pitt, it is also possible to ride north three miles to Klickitat.

We will have a membership renewal drive this spring, but an end-of- year donation would be very much appreciated! Please have a wonderful holiday season, and we hope to see you on the Klickitat Trail on nice days this winter. Many thanks for your ongoing interest and support.

Sincerely,



Barbara Robinson
President, Klickitat Trail Conservancy



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"Working with great constituent groups like the KTC helps us maintain diversity of landscape, parks and resources -- it is exciting to see our area parks improve."

Andy Kallinan, Ranger, Columbia Hills State Park