



Dedicated to the preservation & promotion of the Klickitat Trail

Klickitat Trail Conservancy
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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 semi-annual publication of the Klickitat Trail Conservancy. Submissions are welcome. Articles, photos and comments can be sent to PO Box 512 Lyle, WA 98635 or emailed to info@klickitat-trail.org.

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**“One person can make a
difference and every person
should try.”
John F. Kennedy**

Klickitat Wild ---- Discovering Swale Creek

By Bill Weiler

One doesn't forget a sight like this: Three mountain lions scampered down a slope, one mama and two grown kits. Mama clenched a full-grown turkey in her jaws. Her offspring matched her every stride. They knew what was coming for dinner. Welcome to the wild world of Swale Creek, Klickitat County, and Columbia River Gorge.

East of Portland, Oregon and the windsurfing haven of Hood River, oaks and pines dominate, the terrain turns soft sienna, and a hidden, little-traveled gem, Swale Creek Canyon in Washington State, awaits: the secret prize of the 31-mile Klickitat Rails-to-Trails system, the most remote section winding 11 miles one-way. Starting at the Harms Road Bridge Trailhead, one enters a natural community of flowing grasses and volcanic outcrops. The gentle Trail never strays from Swale Creek, a stream hiding steelhead trout and ample cover for ducks and herons. There is plenty of prey available for the 11 Washington raptor species found here, including bald and golden eagles and the rarer ferruginous hawk. Swale Creek is an outstanding birding area.

In addition to the occasional big cat, coyotes, bobcats, threatened western gray squirrels and LOTS of deer roam the Swale Creek landscape. Plenty of spring migrant birds hang out amidst the dwarf white oak trees. Apparently, smaller oaks are magnets for a variety of moth species, which are in turn gobbled by insect-munching birds, contributing to the rich avian life.

Botanically-rich Catherine Creek (located 20 miles away) attracts the wildflower-loving crowds, but here is secret number two: there are a wider variety of wildflowers along Swale Creek. Habitat diversity comes quickly in this special place. Grasslands, cliffs and water yield downstream to aspen, pine and Douglas fir forests, with the citrus-sweet scent of mock orange and the soothing sounds of water rounding out a highly sensory environment.

Unique and Significant

The Swale Creek Canyon is a critical link between two of the largest publicly-owned conservation areas in Klickitat County. To the south, the 3,000-acre Columbia Hills State Park exudes beauty, recreational opportunities and cultural treasures. The Columbia Hills Natural Area Preserve (NAP) abuts the state park on the north. The NAP was set aside for a cavalcade of botanical blooms, both common and rare. Swale Creek Canyon is a ribbon of beauty leading to the Klickitat River and the 13,000-acre Klickitat Wildlife Area.



A walk in Swale Canyon in spring of 2008

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A few tips for the hiker and bicyclist:

- If you plan to hike or bike one-way, consider a shuttle vehicle at the terminus of Swale Creek Trail section, at the Wahkiacus Trailhead. It's a long way back to Harms Road, and you don't want to be "up the creek".
- Bring water. There are no places to fill a canteen along the way along the 13 miles. In addition, after May, most of Swale Creek goes dry.
- If you stray off the railroad bed, expect a tick or two to find you from February to June.
- Be advised that almost all of the land bordering the Trail is privately owned, so please respect landowner signs and close any live-stock gates you may encounter.
- If you explore the rocky spots, watch where you place your hands to prevent any rattlesnake encounters.
- Leave your swimsuit at home. As mentioned, Swale Creek can be mostly dry and even if a few pools exist, they are algae-full and not the basking-in-the water experience.
- If you like to be alone, away from the masses, the Swale Creek Trail is for you. The Trail receives little use, especially weekdays.



Pay Attention to the Blasting Signs near Fisher Hill Bridge!

Jim Denton

Anyone who has driven through the Lyle area very often on a fall weekend has surely seen all the salmon fishermen with their boats anchored off the mouth of the Klickitat River. If this wasn't enough to convince one that there was a major salmon run up the Klickitat then a trip to the Fisher Hill bridge to watch Indian dip netting or further up to see the fishermen fishing the ripples in their hip waders surely would. The Klickitat has been a prime salmon stream for centuries, but in some people's minds it could be made better. Just a hundred yards from the Klickitat Trail and about a ¼ mile above Fisher Hill Bridge is an area of the Klickitat River narrows known as Lyle Falls. At the falls the river is confined and fast while going over a short drop. Salmon have a hard time passing up over the falls and on through the fast water. Over the years several efforts have been made to improve fish passage. Decades ago a fish ladder was built, but it lacked sufficient water flow to attract migrating fish and the upper end tended to silt in. Various improvements were tried over the years, but so far none have worked well.

At present, a partnership of federal, state, and Indian agencies are planning again to try and improve the operation of the Lyle Falls fish ladder. The plan now is to extend the ladder so that the water will enter in a location less likely to silt in and to design into the fish ladder extra flow

capacity so that fish are more readily attracted to it. In order to make the improvements, contractors will, over the next year, be blasting a channel through the basalt rock of the canyon. This work is being done within a hundred yards of the Klickitat Trail and will affect trail use for several months. There will be much greater and more varied traffic using the road crossing in the vicinity of the falls and from time to time there will be blasting going on. Contractors should have signs posted at the Trail crossing to warn about traffic and are supposed to post sentinels along the Trail and temporarily close the Trail when blasting is being done.

We ask that all Trail users strictly obey all signage and especially vacate the area when directed to do so. It will not be safe to be on the Trail in the area of the falls while blasting is going on. If you hear a Blast Warning Signal, a one minute series of long horn blasts, the blasting will occur within minutes. A Blast Signal, a one minute series of short horn blasts means that blasting is imminent. After a charge is set off, do not enter the area until directed to do so.

Additional information on the work to be performed on the Lyle Falls Fishway can be found at:
<http://www.gc.energy.gov/NEPA/draft-eis0397.htm>

KTC Hiking Schedule, Spring 2009

The following are KTC scheduled events. Everyone is welcome! Please visit www.klickitat-trail.org for more details, schedule changes and maps. Always remember to bring plenty of water and lunch or a snack. The Trail has little elevation change. It can be rocky in places, so good hiking boots are a must. Dress accordingly for the weather. **Pets and smoking are not allowed** on KTC sponsored events. Please stay on the Trail at all times.

DIRECTIONS

Lyle Trailhead is located on the west end of Lyle, WA on the corner of SR-14 and SR-142. Look for the Klickitat Trail sign. From Portland, take I-84 east to the Hood River Bridge. Cross into Washington and turn east on SR-14, to Lyle. From The Dalles, cross The Dalles bridge (Hwy 197) and turn west on SR-14 to Lyle. There is a portable toilet at this location.

Klickitat Railroad Park is located in the town of Klickitat just north of the Canyon Market. From WA Hwy. 14, near the town of Lyle, head north on SR-142 for 13.5 miles.

Harms Road Trailhead is located just off the Lyle-Centerville Hwy. From Lyle, take the Lyle-Centerville Hwy., in the center of town. Head northeast for approximately 15 miles. Turn left on Harms Rd. Drive north one-half mile and park just north of the bridge. There is a portable toilet at this location throughout the spring and early summer only.

Pitt Trailhead is located 10 miles north from SR-14 on SR-142. There is a parking area across the street from a row of houses. There is a portable toilet at this location.

Catherine Creek Trailhead. From Hood River Bridge, take WA SR-14 east 5.8 miles to Old Hwy. 8: turn left, continue 1 mile to Trailhead.

Old Mill Building is in the town of Klickitat, on the east side of Hwy. 142, just past Huntington's Bar and Grill on the north end of town.

Sunday, March 15 Hike

Hike Leader: Barbara Robinson and Dave Berger
(Held Jointly with Friends of the Gorge)

Length about 6 miles. Altitude gain 200 ft.

Wildflower expert Barbara Robinson will lead the first part of this wildflower hike at **Catherine Creek**. The second part of the hike will move to the Klickitat Trail between **Lyle and Fisher Hill Bridge**. The surfaces on both these hikes will be gentle.

Meeting Place: 10:00 am at **Catherine Creek Trailhead**

Sunday, March 22 Hike

Hike Leaders: Donna Enz and Sara Wu
(Held Jointly with Friends of the Gorge
and the Native Plant Society)

Upper Swale Canyon. Moderate: 7 miles round trip, 300-ft. elevation gain.

This is a moderately paced early wildflower hike along Swale Creek in the eastern Gorge. Look for desert parsleys and rare buttercups on this occasionally rocky Trail. If the weather is bad or the spring is late, we may switch to a lower elevation hike.

Meeting Place: 9:30 am at **Lyle Trailhead**. Actual start of hike is 15 miles north of meeting place at the **Harms Road Trailhead**. We will carpool to it.



Photo by Darryl Lloyd

Saturday, March 28 Bike Workshop

9:30 to Noon

Instructor: Portia Masterson

Riding Posture for Cycling Performance and Health

During this class you will learn how to: Use your back, neck, shoulders and arms to eliminate discomfort, pedal efficiently for more fun and less effort, and adjust your bike to support this healthful posture. Learn the underlying principles and evaluate your riding position using your bike on a stationery trainer. Bring your bike and riding shoes.

Portia was a bicycle retailer for 24 years and is the author of [Bicycling Bliss: Riding to Improve Your Wellness](#).

Class limit 10. \$10 fee.

To register call Donna Enz at 509-365-9527 or email her at denz@hughes.net.

Meeting Place: 9:30 at the **Old Mill Building**.

Sunday, March 29 Hike

Hike Leaders: Barbara Robinson and Susan Saul
(Held Jointly with Trails Club of Oregon)

Klickitat Trail: **Wahkiacus to Suburbia** (5 miles round trip or 2 miles if the weather is bad) and **Catherine Creek** (1.5 miles).

Wildflower expert Barbara Robinson and Trails Club of Oregon President, Susan Saul, will take you along the Klickitat River in the first part of this joint hike. This is a lovely and historically interesting stretch of the Klickitat Trail. In the first mile you get to an old Dry Ice Plant and mineral springs. If the weather permits, we'll continue south along the river to the washed out Suburbia trestle. The second part of the hike we will move to Catherine Creek, one of the premiere wildflowers viewing areas in the Gorge. This is timed for the peak of the shooting star bloom.

1st Meeting Place: 9:30 am **Lyle Trailhead**.

2nd Meeting Place: 10:00 am **Wahkiacus Trailhead**.

Hike Schedule continued on Page 4

KTC Hiking Schedule, Spring 2009 –continued

Saturday, April 11 Birding Walk Leader: Stuart Johnston

Birding Walk, starting at Harms Rd and going east towards Warwick, also going west from Harms Rd. a short distance. Klickitat County bird expert Stuart Johnston will lead this hike for serious (or would-be serious) birders. Expect to stand still looking and listening more than walking. Bring warm clothes and binoculars. We're hoping to see Long-billed Curlews and hear Vesper Sparrows, and much more.
First Meeting Place: 7:00 am at **Lyle Trailhead**
Second Meeting Place: 7:45 am at **Harms Rd. Trailhead**



Saturday, April 18 Bike Maintenance Basics 10:00 am until Noon

In this two hour class learn to evaluate your brakes, gears and wheels to prevent mechanical problems on the road. Instructor: Portia Masterson is a retired bicycle retailer and professional bike mechanic with 25 years experience. Bring your bikes, tools, and portable repair stands if you have them. We'll make adjustments to brakes and gears that would be appropriate before or during a ride. Fee: \$10 per person includes instruction and handouts.
Class size limit: 10 people
To register call *Donna Enz* at 509-365-9527 or email her at denz@hughes.net.

Meeting Place: 10 am at **Old Mill Building**

Sunday, April 19 Swale Canyon wildflower bike ride Bike Leaders: Jim Denton and Donna Enz

Mod/Strenuous: 13 miles, 1,000-ft. elev. LOSS
Ride from the high prairie of the Goldendale plateau down to Wahkiacus. We will stop frequently to admire miles of Pungent and Columbia Desert Parsley in bloom and a variety of other native wildflowers as we ride along Swale Creek through oak, pine and Douglas fir riparian habitats. Bring your camera. Helmets, a spare tube and front suspension required; rear suspension recommended.

Meeting Place: 9:00 AM at the **Lyle Trailhead**.

This is a one way shuttled ride so please contact Donna Enz at 509-365-9527 or email her at denz@hughes.net, so that appropriate shuttle arrangements can be made in advance.

Sunday, April 26 Hike (Held Jointly with Friends of the Gorge) Hike leaders: Jim Denton and Bev Linde

Swale Canyon, 13 miles. This is a one way hike through remote and beautiful Swale Canyon. Early flowers should be at peak. Experience miles of yellow, fragrant desert parsley in bloom. The Trail is railroad gravel in places, so wear sturdy boots. There is no access to this section of Trail except at the beginning and end. Come prepared to complete the entire hike which should take about 6 ½ hours. This hike will involve a car shuttle on gravel roads.

Meeting Place: **Lyle Trailhead** at 9:00 AM

Sunday, May 3 Hike Hike Leaders: Bev Linde and Dave Berger

Fisher Hill Bridge to Pitt, 8 miles, rocky in places. This very scenic route along exciting stretches of the Wild and Scenic Klickitat River. It will be at wildflower peak, with balsam root, lupine, and much more.

Meeting Place: **Lyle Trailhead** at 9:30 AM.

Wednesday, May 6 Hike Hike Leaders: Donna Enz and Dave Berger (Held Jointly with Multnomah Athletic Club)

Fisher Hill Bridge to Pitt, 8 miles, rocky in places. This very scenic route moves along exciting stretches of the Wild and Scenic Klickitat River. Wildflowers will be at their peak. You will see balsam root, lupine, and much more.

Meeting Place: **Lyle Trailhead** at 9:30 AM.

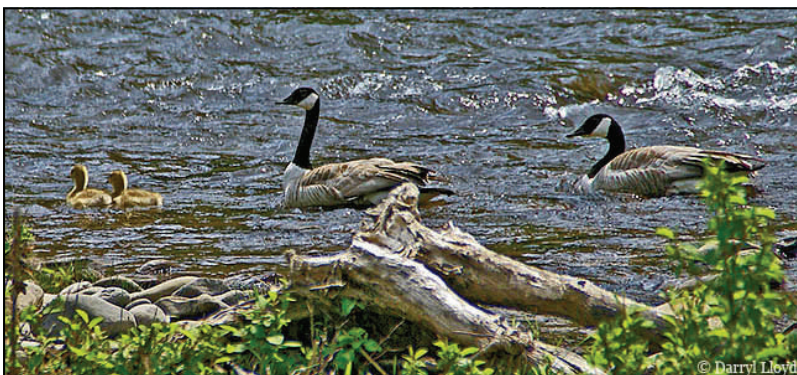


Photo provided by Darryl Lloyd

Saturday, June 6: Hike A National Trails Day Event Hike Leaders: Laura Bales, Cheryl Steindorf, and Laurie Wilhite

Klickitat to Pitt. Depending on the weather this will either be a one-way 3 mile hike or round-trip 6 mile hike. This is a very scenic stretch of the Trail and follows the Klickitat River the entire way.

Meeting Place: 9:30 AM **Lyle Trailhead** or at 10:00 AM at **Pitt Trailhead**

Trail Inspirations

by Ronda Griffin

This last fall, four KTC members went on an adventure and were inspired by what they saw. Dan & Donna Enz and Brian and I went to the Idaho panhandle with the plan to ride our bicycles on the Trail of the Coeur d'Alene. This rail-banked trail meanders along the lakes and marshes east of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho and continues on through small communities and mining towns for 74 miles. Though the trail is paved, it seems to fit perfectly into the wild environment. Trail users are given a unique opportunity to view wildlife and the natural beauty of the area from a safe and environmentally protective vantage point. Signs encourage users to stay on the trail and respect the private property adjacent to the trail. Wayside tables, vault toilets and informational kiosks give users plenty of opportunities to pause and enjoy nature without damage or risk of over-use.

As we rode along we saw much evidence of use of the trail. People bicycling, walking and sharing stories of their adventures as they stopped at the kiosks to learn more about the local history, flora and fauna. Even animals seemed to enjoy the trail. We identified footprints of moose, bear, raccoon and many other animals using the trail to commute from one marshy area to another.

The trail is an excellent example of what can happen when a local community embraces a rail trail rather than fighting it. The businesses in the communities and towns along the way seemed to welcome the energy and profit brought by the tourism the trail has encouraged. Even the smallest business, the boy sitting on his lawn with his ice chest selling water and soft drinks to the people as they passed was profiting.

As we sat at a wayside table to have our picnic lunch, our conversations turned to our own diamond in the rough, our own Klickitat Trail. It is easy to get discouraged by the set-backs and delays, but as we rested we remembered how far we have come and envisioned a rosy future for our Trail. We were encouraged to keep up the work we have begun and to continue to make our Trail an inspiration and joy to all who use it.

Trails Bring Business and Tourism

Rail-trails create myriad outdoor recreation opportunities. The long, uninterrupted stretches of rail corridors, some hundreds of miles, have become destinations for weeklong excursions, day trips and quick escapes. Rail lines were often built along river valleys and the rails along these corridors bring people in touch with their local water, hills, forests and historic attractions, and connect towns and sights.

Because they provide scenic and often historically significant paths, rail-trails have become draws not only for local residents but also for visitors. Cafes, inns, hotels and bike shops have cropped up along trails to serve both locals and tourists. The trails boost local economies and often create new business opportunities in communities where other industries are waning.

Rail-trails enhance the quality of life in the communities in which they are located, in addition to offering transportation alternatives and new business opportunities. Above all, rail-trails help preserve America's railroad history and, when railbanking is used, preserve this valuable resource of our nation's future rail and transportation needs.

(Printed with permission by the National Rail-To-Trails Conservancy -www.railtrails.org)

New Business on Klickitat Trail

Rhonda's Rental Cottage

Want a quiet get-away? Come rent our cottage for a day, or a week. Located about a quarter mile south of Klickitat it has the Klickitat River on one side and the Klickitat Trail on the other. It is ideal for fishing, hiking, biking, or just relaxing in the swing on the back porch and watching the river go by. It sleeps 5 with one double bed, one twin bed upstairs, and a sofa sleeper downstairs that makes into a queen size bed. Full of rustic charm it even has a wood insert in the fireplace. It has a TV with lots of movies available and a complete kitchen. It rents for \$50.00 a night. Call Rhonda or Jim at 509-369-4578.



Rhonda's Shuttle Service

I will shuttle you for fishing or hiking anywhere you want to launch on the Klickitat River or the Klickitat Trail. Call Rhonda at 509.369.4578 for more information.

Be Wary and Watchful for Harmful Invasive Plants and Animals

Slumber I Do Not

By Bev Linde

My name is Spotted Knapweed. I was introduced to North America near the beginning of the twentieth century as a contaminant in imported alfalfa seed. Native grasses do not have a chance with my infestations which affect agriculture and wildlife. I am produced solely by seed and have a deep tap-root. My family is that of the aster family. I start as a rosette of basal leaves and through the years can grow up to four feet tall. Each of my stems culminates in a single pinkish purple flower, similar to a Bachelor's Button. My flowers bloom July through August and I can produce up to 1,000 seeds per plant. I am noted for my ability to grow in a wide range of conditions, from highly disturbed roadsides to the invasion of rangelands.

Prior to making seeds, hand-pulling is the best control over my growth. Once pulled, place me in a bag and incinerate. Gloves are recommended for pulling. For larger more dense populations of spotted knapweed, chemical herbicides may be necessary to eradicate my invasion. Spring spraying is best when I am at the rosette stage.



Spotted Knapweed



Spotted Knapweed Rosette

For the sake of native plants, please consider being one of many who help in eradicating the Spotted Knapweed.

Color photos can be found at www.klickitat-trail.org

New Zealand Mud Snail Alert!

New signs regarding the New Zealand Mud Snail (NZMS) have been posted on several Klickitat Trail Trailheads. This aquatic, invasive snail was discovered in the late 1980's in the Snake River, Idaho and Madison River, Montana. It quickly spread to water in the Yellowstone National Park and is now found in many waters across the West including the Deschutes River and at the mouth of the Columbia River. They are small, only 1/8 inch long. This makes it easy for people to spread them, attached to waders and fishing gear, or by moving fish or bait. They can live for several days with just a slight bit of moisture. At high densities, NZMS alter aquatic habitats and food webs by eating algae and competing with native bottom-dwelling organisms. These ecosystem impacts can reduce trout and other recreational fisheries...FOREVER. So far they have not been found in the Klickitat River. KTC has agreed to be a partner in the fight to keep this invasive out of the Klickitat River. For more information, or to report a sighting, go to: "<http://www.esgmontana.edu/aim/mollusca/nzms>"



photo credit: Larry Mayer/The Billings Gazette

New Zealand Mud Snails can comprise 95% of a river's invertebrate biomass. And can be found in densities up to 750,000 per square meter.

6th Anniversary Celebration

Barbara Robinson

KTC had its 6th Anniversary Celebration on Saturday, October 11. We started with three hikes of varying lengths in conjunction with Friends of the Gorge. The fast group hiked the 8 or 9 miles from Pitt to Fisher Hill. The easy group did two 2 mile hikes, one starting at Fisher Hill and going south a mile and the other starting at Pitt and going north. The intermediate group started at Fisher Hill and walked north a few miles until they met the fast group coming the other way, and then turned around. The fast group commented that they had met about 20 other people biking and hiking the Trail. The day was perfect - sunny with a cool morning and warm afternoon. The fall colors were beginning and the river was beautiful. Everyone finished hiking in time to come to our luncheon in Klickitat, at the Old Mill Building that has just been converted to a community center. There were a great variety of refreshments, and while we ate we did some public reminiscing on the beginning of the Trail and how far we have come since then. We also awarded a hiking boot of flowers (Cheryl's special hiking boot!) to Harold and Evelyn Wethered. Harold has been a wonderful emissary for the Trail, giving out maps and information to people stopping at Pitt, and making sure everyone finds the Trail. Finally, to Mike P. our excellent Americorps trail steward, we awarded a golden railroad spike. A fine time was had by all. If you couldn't make it, we hope to see you next year!

Hello,

I just wanted to thank you for all your work. As a child growing up in Klickitat I spent a lot of time walking the rails. After leaving Klickitat and having my own family, I wanted to take my children on a hike south from Pitt. (This was prior to the Trail being managed by KTC and the State Parks.) We were met by a homeowner and told to turn around. There was also a Boy Scout troop lead by a former resident that was told they could not pass in front of the homeowner's property. The river is very beautiful and should be shared and respected by those who use this area. I now live in Salem Oregon and have a coworker who would like to hike the Trail. Because of you this is possible. I am proud to say this is where I spent my childhood.

Thanks again,
Julie (Fink) Hunter

Hiking In The Heat

Hiking the Klickitat Trail is a great way to enjoy the scenic Klickitat Valley. Don't become part of it. The Trail can get hot, even in the spring. Some areas have little or no shade. If the forecast is for a hot day, remember to hike smart and follow these important suggestions:

- Be aware of hiking conditions and the weather. If you know you are sensitive to the heat, don't hike that day.
- Wear a hat and sunglasses
- Use sun block on exposed areas and sun block on your lips
- Bring plenty of water and an electrolyte-replacement drink like Gatorade. By the time you get a headache, feel thirst, tired, and nauseous, you are suffering from dehydration.
- If you feel these symptoms, rest, eat and drink plenty of fluids.
- Bring snacks and extra food for energy.
- Hike wet. Bring a bandanna to wet down and cool your self.

Become A KTC Volunteer

Donna Enz

In 2002 the Klickitat Trail Conservancy was formed through grit and determination by a handful of dedicated individuals. They had seen what intimidation from a few hostile Trail opponents could do and were set on making this public Trail just that. Some Trail intimidation still exists in the form of illegal gates. That problem is being addressed by Washington State Parks and the US Forest Service.

Over the past six years the change has been dramatic. The outright hostilities have come to an end and the Trail is a safe place to enjoy. KTC work parties have dramatically improved the Trail. Bollards have been erected to keep illegal traffic off the Trail. Rocks, overgrown vegetation, fallen trees and wet areas have been improved, making the path a luxury compared to a few years ago. All this has been accomplished by the same dedicated folks who believed in a Trail that was a rocky unusable weed patch six years ago. But there is still so much to do.

Running an all volunteer organization is not easy. It takes money, dedication, and most importantly, volunteers. KTC needs help to complete the work that was started six years ago. If you have a few hours to spend on a work party or would like to volunteer to co-lead a hike, let us know. If you have computer skills and have a few hours a month to spend on membership management, please contact us. info@klickitat-trail.org



Hikers aren't the only ones who enjoy the Klickitat Trail. Photograph by Darryl Lloyd .

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**KICKITAT
 TRAIL
 CONSERVANCY**