

Nov. 19, 2016

Dear KTC Friends and Supporters –

A great deal has been accomplished this year, in large part because of your strong support for KTC! We are delighted to announce that the beautiful property along the trail that was donated to KTC in May of 2015 now belongs to State Parks. It required a huge and very expensive cleanup, with professional help plus many work parties, but finally we met State Parks' stringent standards and on Oct 24 it became State Parks land. There is now a picnic table in a lovely spot under the oaks. We will put in a memorial bench for Irvin Mitchell, the donor, at a little viewpoint overlooking the river. Along the river is access to a little sand beach. This property already has nice native wildflowers and we have seeded it heavily with more. This should make it even lovelier over the next few years.

We received a wonderful surprise this summer when a 2014 State Parks grant request that had initially been denied was retroactively awarded after all. This grant is for decking trestles and gravelling the trail through the 13 miles of Swale Canyon. The details of the project are now being decided at Park's regional office in Wenatchee, with scheduled completion in three years. Meanwhile, thanks to a grant last year from Columbia Gorge Environmental Foundation, our local State Park office has already replaced all the bad ties and put a couple of parallel boards across the trestles in Swale Canyon as a temporary fix, so hiking Swale has already become safer and easier.

This year KTC has led an effort to get a 2016 State Parks grant to fix the one-mile disconnect we have in the trail between Klickitat and Suburbia, where a trestle over the Klickitat River was removed. Money that Irvin Mitchell left to Rails-to-Trails to benefit the Klickitat Trail is being offered as a match for that grant. We will not know whether we will get all or part of this grant until spring of 2017.

On Nov. 15 three of us appeared before the Klickitat Co. Commissioners and gave a presentation on the economic value of rail-trails, and especially the economic stimulus they can be to small businesses in little towns along the way. We emphasized that the Klickitat Trail has tremendous natural beauty, but needs a better surface to attract the older biking enthusiasts and family groups who often travel to other states and spend several days biking in an area. We compared the Hiawatha Trail and neighboring Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes in Northern Idaho to the Klickitat Trail and the Old Scenic Hwy. Trail in the Columbia Gorge as multi-day biking destinations, if only our trail had a better surface and the dis-connect were fixed. We got a cordial reception.

For the fourth year a marathon, half-marathon, and five K run were held on the trail, based at the new Klickitat Community Center. The race took place Nov. 5, and after the race the happy runners were treated to soup and goodies. KTC does not put on this event, but we help, and have a work party to clean up the trail before the event. We are happy to announce that Lynda Esaakson, who created this event, joined our board this fall. This marathon run (26 miles from Klickitat to Lyle and back) is just the kind of thing that long ago we hoped the trail would be used for.

KTC is holding work parties to maintain the trail as usual, but we have decided to reduce our hiking schedule. The hikes were to introduce people to the trail, and the trail is now well known and gets quite a bit of use. Also our board is no longer made of spring chickens (Alright, it never

was, but we are even less springy now) and fewer of us can be hike leaders. We are now going to focus on offering hikes that are joint hikes with other organizations. If you or a group you are part of would like us to organize a hike for you, contact us and we will try to accommodate you.

Equestrian use on the trail has increased, and we would like to caution equestrians that Swale Canyon is not yet ready for horse use. The many trestles are not yet decked for horses and there is no way to go around the trestles through the creek without trespassing. When the Swale project is completed, horse use should be possible. Right now a really nice ride is from Pitt, where parking is easy, 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 if you would like to give an end-of-year donation, it 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.

The Best to You,
Barbara Robinson, KTC president