

KLICKITAT
TRAIL
CONSERVANCY



Dedicated to the preservation & promotion of the Klickitat Trail

August 1, 2023

Dear Loyal Supporters of the Klickitat Trail and Klickitat Trail Conservancy,

Thank you so much for joining us in our mission to help preserve and promote the public use of the Klickitat Trail! KTC is an all-volunteer non-profit organization. Your contributions are our only source of funding. This letter is our once-a-year request for you to renew your membership, or to join us for the first time. This year KTC turns 21. You are all invited to our 21st anniversary celebration on Saturday, Oct. 28, our first since COVID. We will start with a tailgate breakfast at 10:00 am at the Lyle Trailhead. There will be more information on the website and on our List Serve as the time approaches. We hope to see you there!

For 21 years now KTC has worked to make this once impassable and controversial Trail a beautiful recreational gem that benefits users, local businesses, the County, and the Columbia Gorge. At first, KTC did lots of physical labor just to make the Trail usable, and was in the forefront of getting rid of illegal "No Trespassing" signs and other barriers to Trail use. Then we worked on trail basics like signage, outhouses, and boards over trestles. We also pushed for larger projects, such as developing the Lyle Trailhead and decking the Fisher Hill Trestle. Now we are delighted to report that the Trail is getting a great deal of use, and every year is a more accepted part of the community! When we are weeding or picking up trash, folks often tell us how much they enjoy the Trail and that they use it regularly for health and exercise. We see all the users it was intended for - hikers, bikers, and horses. Also a new use, e-biking, is currently being allowed to see how it works. This spring WA State Parks put up counters at all the trailheads to get some measure of trail use.

It is so heartening to see our trail neighbors supporting the Klickitat Trail! This year a couple at Pitt are volunteering to put a picnic table by the Pitt boat launch. KTC has offered to pay for materials to refinish the table. At Pitt the trail right-of-way includes a long stretch of river frontage, and the boat launch is a lovely area for a picnic! In the last few years KTC paid to gravel the Pitt trailhead with fine gravel. Another Pitt resident kindly smooths out that gravel on the Trail side of the road when he does his own. He also mentioned that he picks up the trash along the Trail. In Klickitat the Community Council makes sure that the trail is weed-eaten down. KTC gives a substantial donation each year to support that. The part of the Trail in Klickitat that runs between the school and the Community Center was paved last year by Klickitat County, so that kids could ride their bikes between the two.

In the last two years WA State Parks has been able to hire more staff to work on the trail. The grass has been kept down at the Lyle Trailhead, which is crucial to control fire hazard there, and more trail pruning and clearing has been done by Parks than in the past. Also for the first time, the last half mile of the Trail near Uecker Rd has been cleared and made usable. At the Lyle Trailhead, night lights with motion detectors have been installed to discourage illegal night use at the trailhead. We have seen swings in funding for Parks, but at the moment the situation is good. When we report a downed tree or a gate with locks gone, State Parks has been able to take care of it quickly.

Two large State Parks grant projects have both seen progress this year. The Swale Canyon project will deck seven trestles in Swale Canyon and add high guard rails

suitable for horses. Also, finer gravel will be put on top of seven stretches of raw rail ballast rock. These are now hard to walk or bike or ride a horse over. Parks will also spread fine gravel on the first and last half mile or so of the Trail. The drawings for this contract work are now over 90% done, and the project is supposed to go out to bid in October. If that happens, work could start in the Spring.

The second grant is for a very needed bridge across the Klickitat River about a half mile upriver from the town of Klickitat. This would replace a trestle that was removed after the '96 flood. Right now, doing the whole 31 mile Trail requires hiking or biking about 3 miles along SR-142, a curvy road with no shoulders. This is dangerous, plain and simple. The bridge would eliminate most of the road section and allow people to use a beautiful 3 mile section of trail right along the river instead. Right now you can hike or bike that lovely part of the trail, but it dead-ends at the missing trestle. KTC started a push in 2015 to get this bridge grant submitted and funded. It was approved in January, 2018, but State Parks worked on the the Swale Canyon Grant first. Complications with the Swale grant, Covid, and short staffing made it impractical to work on both at once. Last year we finally saw progress on this bridge grant, and in December, 2022 a consultant was hired. The consultant has offered three bridge possibilities, one being a suspension bridge. That could be done without working in the river, so would require less permitting. At last we are seeing some progress on this grant, and that is exciting! Irvin Mitchell, who donated his land along the Trail to KTC (we gave it to State Parks), left his entire estate to the national Rails-to-Trails Conservancy for the sole benefit of the Klickitat Trail. After consulting with KTC, Rails-to-Trails gave Irv's estate to WA State Parks as a match for the bridge grant. We hope to see this very important bridge actually completed, and Irv's bequest fulfilled!

Another wonderful project is happening next to our Trail. The Forest Service is hard at work developing a beautiful riverfront area a mile up the Klickitat River from Lyle as a day use park. It had become a bedraggled defacto campground with lots of trash and erosion. It is wonderful to see it being fixed up and made user-friendly. You will be able to detour from the Trail down to the park and the river if you want.

KTC thanks all of you so very much who have supported us over the years. We hope you have enjoyed watching the progress of this spectacular Trail. Great thanks too and Welcome if you are a new Klickitat Trail supporter. KTC tries to do the basics, like trail cleanup and paying for outhouses, that keep the Trail functioning day to day, as well as pushing for large projects. It is your support that allows us to do that! We want to assure you that we do not sell or give away any of our members' contact information. We hope you have a chance to enjoy the Trail this Fall, and are looking forward to seeing you at our 21st anniversary celebration!

Basic annual membership is \$25, but any amount you can contribute is greatly appreciated! You can mail a check to PO BOX 512, Lyle, WA 98635, or go to our website, www.klickitat-trail.org to contribute. It would help KTC communicate with you if you would consider joining the Mailing List on the website, under "Contact Us". We only send a few emails, mostly for work parties or newsletters like this one.

The Best to you from the entire KTC board.



Barbara Robinson, KTC President