

## 2011 - A Banner Year

2011 was a banner year for the Klickitat Trail. We celebrated the completion of two major, long awaited improvements - a beautiful new trailhead in Lyle and the decking of the dramatic Fisher Hill Trestle.

The idea for the trailhead started in the late 1990s, when the land along Hwy 14 between the trail (an old railroad right of way) and the Klickitat River came up for sale. That property had a marvelous view of the Klickitat River, and Nancy Russell, founder of Friends of the Gorge, envisioned a trailhead and wayside there that would also make an attractive entrance to the town of Lyle. She bought the land, and later sold it to Washington State Parks at half of what she paid. The Forest Service, which partners with WA State Parks in managing the first 13.5 miles of the trail, then designed the trailhead, and found money to build it through the Federal Dept. of Transportation. After a lengthy permitting process, building started in spring of 2011. The trailhead is landscaped with native trees and shrubs, and has lovely curving rock walls reminiscent of the Old Scenic Hwy. on the OR side, which were done by a company in Hood River. There is a rest room, a drinking fountain, and also a lovely viewpoint.

The Fisher Hill Trestle, two miles up the trail from Lyle, spans the deep, dramatic Klickitat Canyon. Here salmon fight their way up the little tributary Silvas Creek in spring, and the tribes still do their traditional dip net fishing from platforms for salmon and steelhead. (Please stay on the trail and do not disturb the fishermen!) In 2003 State Parks closed the trestle for safety reasons until it could be decked and a guard rail added. The Forest Service supplied an engineering plan for the work, and with that in hand State Parks applied for Washington State funds to do the project. Again the permitting process was lengthy, but work finally started in Fall of 2011, and your walk up the trail from the new Lyle trailhead will now be rewarded with a spectacular view of the rushing waters of the Klickitat.

In addition to these major achievements, two other projects were done to make the trail experience better. Mile markers were put in by the Forest Service on the first 13 miles of the trail, and they had volunteer help from a class of students from Goldendale. Also more signage was added along roads to help people find the trailheads.

KTC hopes to see you out on the trail enjoying these trail additions!

## Volunteers Needed!

Each year KTC does the lion's share of basic trail maintenance on the entire 31 miles of the trail. We have work parties to prune, pull weeds, clear rock fall, and pick up trash. This year we have a number of downed trees and branches in the trail that will need clearing. These work parties are announced on our list serve and on the web site, usually a week or two ahead of time. If you would like to add your name to our list serve and get hike and work party announcements, email us at [info@klickitat-trail.org](mailto:info@klickitat-trail.org)

We are looking for folks who would like to be trail stewards, and take on a section, perhaps two miles, of the trail to regularly maintain. This would involve pruning, trash

pickup, getting rocks out of the way, and weeding. If you want to be a steward for a section, we will put your name up on that section if you like.

Volunteer help will be needed at the new Lyle trailhead to pick up trash and keep the weeds under control, so if you live in the area and would like to help out, it would be greatly appreciated.

Everyone who walks the trail can be an informal steward. If you trip over a rock or stick, move it out of the trail so the next person doesn't fall. Take a plastic bag with you to pick up some trash, especially in sections where the trail is next to a road and so road trash gets on the trail. I always carry a light pair of hand pruners in my pack so I can cut blackberry vines ("trip vines"), and small branches that want to hit me in the face. You shouldn't feel you have to do it all. If many people each do just a little, a lot gets done.

#### Funding Dramatically Cut for WA State Parks

The economic downturn of the last few years has hit WA State Parks especially hard. The current Washington State government has taken the view that State Parks should not be funded out of the general tax funds, but rather should pay its own way through fees charged to park users, rather like turning Parks into a little private enterprise within the government. So far the fees are not producing the projected income, and there have been a number of layoffs of staff. This in turn has created a reshuffling of positions and locations of those remaining. For KTC, this has had large consequences. Three of the four full time State Parks staff we have worked with over the years are now gone, including the head of WA State Parks Eastern Region, the director of Goldendale area and Columbia Gorge parks, and a full time park ranger. State Parks will be very short handed for the foreseeable future, and the help we can give in maintaining the trail is particularly important now.

In addition, key positions for the Columbia Gorge, National Scenic Area have new faces. A new head of the Forest Service, National Scenic Area was announced in January, and in Feb. a new director of the Columbia Gorge Commission was chosen. With both Washington State Parks and the National Scenic Area, KTC has a very important role in providing continuity and educating those new to their positions about trail issues and concerns.

Please consider supporting Wa. State Parks in these unfortunate times by buying the \$30 State Parks Pass. You do not need it for the Klickitat Trail, but you do need it for all the parks, such as Doug's Beach, Beacon Rock, and Columbia Hills (Horsethief Lake) State Park. It will also save you a per-day fee of \$10. everywhere in the State.