



UPCOMING FORUM

A lot has been happening in the Natural Area with the trail system during the last few months. We have also been getting some strong feedback on issues from those who have been using our trails over the years, and were somewhat surprised by the changes. To address all this (and more), we will be hosting a forum on Tuesday, November 12th, to give the public an opportunity to both to find out more about these changes and to express their opinion on what is working and what is not. The event will be held at the Mountain Gear Corporate headquarters at 6021 East Mansfield in the Spokane Valley, not far from Felt Field and the northern end of Fancher Way. The time will be 7 pm. There will be representatives for Spokane County Parks and the Department of Natural Resources, both co-managers of the Natural Area, so there will be no “passing-the-buck” on responses to you.

Much of the trail redesign is to address the fact that many of the older trails leave the Natural Area and extend onto adjacent private land. Back in the “old days” it was not such a big deal to hike into the forest without considerations about land ownership. Now these trespass issues are more important and we thought it was time to redesign the trails to loop hikers away from the adjacent private lands. Secondly, being a conservation group, we want to restore the trail segments no longer needed, sort of a balance to the ecology of making new trails. So, let’s talk. Some finger-pointing will be allowed and strong opinions are OK. We have provided three generations of our community the opportunity to enjoy nature in their backyard, and if we all work together, many more generations can experience the same.

U.S. STUFF

Coming up in Congress (maybe) will be the consideration to pass the Conservation Easement Incentive Act (H.R. 2807). The Act would make permanent a tax deduction for landowners who voluntarily protect their lands with conservation easements. This deduction has had bipartisan support on short-term bases, but as a good idea that has worked well, it should be awarded some permanence. Our Conservancy holds several easements and thinks H.R. 2807 is a good thing. If you agree, you might want to contact your local Representative to express yourself. More information on this issue is on the Land Trust Alliance website, www.lta.org.

TRICK OR TREAT

A related issue to the trails is what to do with several blank information boards in kiosks at trailheads which we have been offered to use. Beside the questions about what to put on the boards, there are the considerations of durability. Vandalism has been a problem in the Natural Area for some time, and is a major challenge for natural land management. Some of you that have hiked up to the ponds lately might have noticed that the railings to the observation platform have been torn down. The small bridge at Goldback spring and the several wooden benches trailside suffer annual damage.

Assuming that the indigenous wildlife is not involved with these alterations, we are placing the blame on the small fraction of forest users that want to leave their mark behind. How do we manage this problem best? Will listing rules on the trailhead signs condemn them to destruction by those who disagree? Over the years we have found that less is more when it comes to managing vandalism. Any manmade structures seem to invite some sort of destruction, from graffiti to littering. Maybe expending resources on forest facilities is not the best way to go for the Conservancy. Sometimes it is better to design signs and trailhead displays to not only withstand this assault, but to be easy to repair or replace. Stay tuned to see what we come up with for trailhead and trail junction signs. Maybe this could be another topic for our Forum on November 12th. With the new conservation lands on Tower Mountain to the south, more signage will be necessary to inform the public of rules and trail options.

CONSERVANCY NEWS

We are a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to saving nature areas in the Spokane region for public enjoyment and education. Call Eric Robison, 202-0767, if you have questions. Our board meets every month on the third Tuesday. Our next meeting will be November 19th, 7 pm. We meet at the Moran Prairie Spokane County Library, 6004 South Regal Street. Visitors are always welcomed.

The following are our September donors that have consented to be listed: Karrie Brown, Nancy Cashion, Jeff & Robin Gray, The Hobnailers, Johnston-Fix Foundation, Stephanie Lambert, Cynthia Langlois, Susan McBurney, George Momany, Shirley Schmidt, Ann Sheridan, Star Steel, Elnore Wildermuth, Joyce Wilkens, and one anonymous donor. Thank you one and all!

Nature always has the last word—John Stewart Collins

YES, I want to help protect our natural areas in the Spokane Region

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