



LATAH TRAIL

# Latah Trail Foundation

Fall 2013 Newsletter

## Trail News Tidbits...

- We have a lot to be thankful for this year; not in the least, tremendous community support. Thank you to all of our donors and volunteers. The trail would not exist without you.
- The LTF has a new website! Thank you to the Moscow Giving Circle, whose donation made this project possible. Thank you also to First Step Internet, who did a beautiful job designing the site.
- The Bear Creek Canyon Celebration on September 21st was well attended, and quite fun. Thank you to the Filling Station for the wonderful desserts and to Forgotten Freight, whose music made the day fun and festive.
- Please participate in an online survey designed to gather opinions, feelings, and hopes for the future of the Latah Trail. The survey can be found on our website.
- LTF will be at the Alternative Giving Market on Dec. 4th, 4 – 8:00 pm at the Prichard Art Gallery.

### Latah Trail Foundation Board of Directors:

Ron Landeck  
Tom Lamar  
Nancy Chaney  
Margaret Dibble  
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### Executive Director:

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### Intern:

Kenzie Payne

## Latah Trail – expanding toward Kendrick one step at a time

Bear Creek Canyon is one of those special places we are lucky to have in our own backyard. A trek down this portion of the Latah Trail will bring you in the midst of towering pines and the meandering Bear Creek whose intensity changes with the seasons. It is a beautiful, peaceful place during any season. We are now coming upon the snowy time of year, and this portion of the trail makes for a wonderful (and easy) snowshoe or cross-country ski journey.

In the coming years we will have more of this lovely canyon to enjoy. The Latah Trail Foundation is excited to announce that through its efforts, Latah County has acquired an additional  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile of public trail in Bear Creek Canyon. We enjoyed working with a Bear Creek Canyon land owner to negotiate the sale of their rail property to Latah County. We thank them very much for the time they spent with us to work on the transfer of their property. The funds to purchase the property were donated to the Foundation from a generous anonymous donor. The Foundation thanks all who were involved in this exciting project.

Following the railroad being abandoned, and thus also its maintenance, there has been quite a bit of damage to this section over the years due to mud slides from above and washouts from below. Latah County and trail volunteers are working to mitigate further damage to the trail this winter season, while the County and the Foundation are actively pursuing funding to repair the trail in 2014. Once repairs are completed, the Bear Creek Canyon portion of the Latah Trail will extend almost 5 miles from Troy toward Kendrick. Latah County does not own the entire right-of way through the canyon, as portions of the old rail line are still in private ownership and the public currently has no right of access to those portions.

The Bear Creek Canyon portion of the Latah Trail is a very different, more isolated experience than the rest of the Latah Trail. We remind you that experiencing Bear Creek Canyon is like a backcountry experience in both its remoteness and proximity to wildlife (bears and moose have been sighted in the past). Please be safe, and as always, respect private property. The overwhelmingly positive response to the Kendrick-Juliaetta trail and Troy-Moscow trail convinces us that the extension of the Latah Trail is an opportunity the public wants to pursue and is a worthy investment for the enduring benefit of the residents of Latah County.



## Become a Member Today!

- \$25 Individual
- \$45 Couple/Family
- \$15 Living Lightly
- \$100 Trail Advocate
- \$250 Sustaining Member
- \$500 Human Powered Hero



## Little Known and Well Known by Scott Oplinger

Washington's Fish Lake Trail is a little-known trail between Spokane and Cheney. While not necessarily a destination trail, it is a good side trip if you're already in Spokane or Coeur d'Alene. It is paved for 7.5 miles, running between two active rail lines. But you might hear and not see a train, as the embankments along the trail are high.

As a web site describing the trail says, once you leave Spokane you quickly forget the city and find relative peace and quiet. It is slightly uphill for almost the entire trek south, with only a couple crossings. You'll end up in Marshall, which I believe is the starting point for the original railroad mile markers on the Latah Trail. Back at the beginning of the trail in Spokane, there is a nice trailhead with a restroom where you'll be looking up to the high, active railroad trestles that are visible from I-90. Someday this trail will be paved all the way to Cheney and will connect to the Columbia Plateau Trail, Spokane's Centennial Trail, and eventually to the Iron Horse/John Wayne Trail. See more at [http://www.inlandnorthwesttrails.org/projects/fish\\_lake\\_trail.asp](http://www.inlandnorthwesttrails.org/projects/fish_lake_trail.asp).

Most everyone has taken a ride on the well-known 15-mile Hiawatha Trail in Idaho, truly a destination trail. But if you haven't, it is about 115 miles to Avery, Idaho from Moscow, taking nearly 3 hours. It is a round trip that can easily be done in one day in the summer months. There are two routes to Avery: 1) Up ID 95 to Plummer, east on ID 5 to St. Maries, then east on FH 50 to Avery, or 2) Go up ID 95 to Potlatch, then east on ID 6 and north on ID 3 to St. Maries, then east on FH 50 to Avery. It is then just a 9-mile gravel road to the Hiawatha Trailhead. The best part of the drive up to Avery along FH 50, is that it follows the scenic St. Joe River, which is an Idaho Scenic Byway. The Hiawatha Trail is not paved, but has a relatively smooth surface for a trail. There is a fee to ride the trail (\$10 for adults, \$6 for children), and a jacket and light are a must. Just about everything you need can be rented there: bike, helmet, light, and trailers. You can even purchase a lunch. There are shuttles that can take you to the top so all you have to do is coast back down. But be sure to stop and read the interpretive signs as they are very well worth the time. And if you haven't read *The Big Burn*, by Timothy Egan, I highly recommend it too. It is subtitled "Teddy Roosevelt & The Fire That Saved America." An excellent read.

The Hiawatha is a must-ride because of the trestles, tunnels, scenery and history. The longest tunnel is the Taft Tunnel, at 1.7 miles, which is why you must bring a jacket and light. The trestles are high and long, feats of engineering themselves. The scenery is nothing less than breathtaking and spectacular. The history is equally fascinating: *Which trains had the highest priority during WWII? Silk Trains. What do the tunnel numbers mean?* There are about 15 tunnels from Avery to the Taft Tunnel. The Taft Tunnel is tunnel #20 from Chicago. Unbelievable. There was a railroad employee at the eastern hair-pin curve in the trail whose job it was to toss sand on the tracks for better traction in the winter. A guide told me, "If he wasn't the loneliest man in America he could see the loneliest man in American from where he was!" Plan your trip and whet your appetite at <http://www.ridethehiawatha.com/>.

*Scott Oplinger is a Board Member of the Latah Trail Foundation.*

### People Watching on the Latah Trail by Kenzie Payne

People watching is one of the great trans-generational past times. There are little old ladies who pretend to read newspapers at McDonalds. Construction workers who take their coffee break outside a gas station. And college kids who check their phones at a bagel shop. These activities are mere secondary muses to the great people watching escapade. Personally, I like to head out to the cemetery for people watching. I practice my bagpipes for my pretend activity. From the vantage point of the cemetery I am able to watch Latah Trail users.

Young couples use the trail to walk their dogs. Kids on tricycles pedal as fast as they can to keep up with their parents. College-aged students use the trail parallel to the cemetery for their jogging route. People in fluorescent green outfits on speedy bicycles roar past everybody. And then there are the regular ol' jeans and t-shirt users like myself. I don't own a pair of biking shorts or even a fancy water bottle. I ride my 1970's era Schwinn out to the cemetery. It is just far enough from home to feel like I got the blood in my legs moving again.

From the trail that runs past the cemetery I can head east and eventually ride into Troy. I made the Moscow to Troy trip with some friends a couple of times this summer. Troy is an excellent day trip from Moscow. The best thing about Troy after a bike ride is the Filling Station. There are a number of breakfast items on their menu. So, after filling up I can head back to Moscow.

I have also taken the Chipman Trail west from Moscow to Pullman. I always want to stop by Ferdinand's Ice Cream Shop when I get to Pullman, but have not quite made it there yet. They say the ice cream hits the spot after a bike ride. I bet the people watching is equally as wonderful.

*Kenzie Payne is a graduate student in Bioregional Planning at UI and the LTF's intern*



## Why I Support Rails-to-Trails by Scott Oplinger

Years ago, a co-worker had told me, “When you turn 50, you fall apart.” She was right. I was 50.6 years old on the same weekend as Hurricane Katrina, and was not allowed to even walk out of the ultrasound room. I had a DVT – Deep Vein Thrombosis, in my right thigh. A blood clot. And it wasn’t a little one. I lay in a hospital bed for 3 days, my first

overnight hospital stay in my life, watching the tragedy on TV as I endured my own little tragedy. The damage to my leg was permanent and severe, not to mention nearly fatal. Fast forwarding to a couple years ago, another ultrasound technician was astonished to see how my leg had rerouted veins. I had become a crazy recumbent rider.

The only treatment that works for my DVT is elevating my leg. I’ve always been physically active, but what exercise could I do that wouldn’t be painful? I could walk 3-5 miles at most, but standing for even 5 minutes was painful. So, in 2006 I bought a long wheelbase recumbent without ever having ridden one, but I knew what I was seeing, ergonomically speaking. My recumbent was expensive because I’m 6’3” and needed a big bike - my recumbent is nearly 8’ long. But I theorized that if I could elevate my leg while riding I could have the exercise I wanted. It has worked.

The combination of my recumbent and rail-trails has been one of the most amazing blessings of my life. I’ve averaged more than 3,000 miles in each of the last 4 years, and have exceeded 16,000 miles in 8 years on my recumbent. We have 22 miles of paved rail-trail locally on the Latah Trail, Paradise Path, and Bill Chipman Trail. But my cup runneth over. Just 50 miles north of Moscow is one of our nation’s 20 or so Rail-Trail Hall of Fame Trails, the Trail of the Coeur d’Alenes. It is 72 miles of paved former rail bed through northern Idaho, spanning nearly the Idaho Panhandle, and unbelievably, has about 50 miles of flat trail stretching from Chatcolet Lake at the southern end of Lake Coeur d’Alene all the way through the chain lake area of 11 named lakes or marshes to Cataldo and on to Wallace, ending in Mullan. But from there it continues with a shared connection to the Hiawatha Trail, another Hall of Fame Rail-Trail.

I’ve seen bald eagles, otter, many moose (almost ran into one once), deer, turkeys, and osprey while riding the Trail of the Coeur d’Alenes. And some of my best memories and rides have been with my son, who is now serving in the US Army, a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne, a graduate of Gonzaga University. We’ve ridden the entire length of the trail in one day three times, and have spent countless hours camping at Heyburn State Park’s Hawley’s Landing Campground, just a mile from the Trail of the Coeur d’Alenes. I camped there recently, and reminisced many days over the past decade and how fortunate I am.

How fortunate I am, we are, that a hundred years ago men built rail lines that are now the perfect foundation for bike trails. And inline skaters, runners, walkers, strollers, trikes and recumbents. Would the pioneers from a hundred years ago believe what has resulted from their labors? Can we truly appreciate what they built, what it must have been like to build rail beds, bridges, tunnels through spectacular yet forbidding terrain without today’s machines? The wonder of it all humbles me and brings me full-circle to my little Katrina, my DVT, and what blessings can result from our setbacks.

My retirement dream is to ride every Rail-Trail Hall of Fame trail, to ride every great trail in every state across our nation, beautifully illustrated and described in Rails-to-Trails Magazine. What could be better?

See You On the Trail!

*Scott Oplinger is a Board Member of the Latah Trail Foundation.*

## Help the Latah Trail, become a Board Member by Kenzie Payne

There is a village in East Africa called Ukemele. Many people who live in Ukemele are from the Hehe tribe. They speak the Hehe language. *Ukemele* is a tribal word roughly translated into English as *gathering place*. The village was named *gathering place* not because of its centralized population. In fact, most villagers are spread out across vast tracts of land. Ukemele was named for a large rock. The immovable object is situated in a landscape not-known to have rocks. Village members built a school around the erratic feature. Eventually a few homes were placed nearby. The rock now sits at the intersection of a small plot of corn and a foot path. Chickens perch on top of Ukemele’s trusted namesake. School children lounge under the patch of shade it provides. If the rock was human it could share so much knowledge about the inner workings of its community. The rock could stand up, put its hands on its hips, and communicate to people walking by. What kind of advice would the rock give to Ukemele? No one will ever know. A rock is a rock. But you, who are reading the Latah County Trail Newsletter, are not rocks. You know your community. Creativity is in your nature. And, although you may not have as much free time as a rock, you don’t need to. The Latah County Trail System is looking for someone with a few hours to spare each month. We look forward to supporting ideas from a hard working community member. We are not interested in a rock from East Africa. We are however, intrigued by what a rockstar, particularly from Troy, Kendrick, or Juliaetta, can contribute. If you are interested, please email your letter of interest to [latahtrail@gmail.com](mailto:latahtrail@gmail.com).

*Kenzie Payne is a graduate student in Bioregional Planning at UI and the LTF’s intern*

