

A Day to Toil on a Trail

By Seabury Blair Jr.
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File photos by Seabury Blair Jr. Washington Trail Association volunteers work on clearing a log from the Skokomish River Trail at a past work party. Saturday is National Trails Day and many associations, including the Clear Creek Task Force, will be cleaning and working on trails throughout Kitsap and Western Washington.



Ethan Adelman-Sil totes a boulder during a volunteer work session on the Skokomish Trail last year. The North Kitsap Trails Association is hosting a potluck picnic in Port Gamble on Saturday.

Saturday is National Trails Day, your chance to give something back to your favorite wilderness pathway.

In fact, the pathway doesn't even have to be in the wilderness. Take Central Kitsap's Clear Creek Trail or Port Gamble's infant String of Pearls Trail, for example.

Join the Clear Creek Task Force from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday to help them, members of the Kitsap branch of the Mountaineers and local Boy Scouts clean the beach in Old Mill Park. Other activities include guided trail walks, trail guides, a lemonade stand and local Audubon Society birding walks.

Those registering in advance for the beach cleanup will get a Mountaineers National Trails Day t-shirt, although you needn't register in advance to help out. Cleanup participants are asked to bring garbage bags, gloves and sturdy shoes. To register for the cleanup or get more information, call (360) 613-5500; e-mail clearcreektrail@yahoo.com.

The North Kitsap Trails Association will host a trail celebration in Port Gamble, one of the trailheads for the proposed String of Pearls Trail, at 10 a.m. Saturday. A potluck picnic and hikes are on the agenda. For information, call (360) 621-1131 or e-mail john@radicallyinclined.com.

If you'd prefer a less urban setting to help celebrate with as many as a million trail users throughout the country, consider several other events planned in our neck of the woods. There's an Olympia Mountaineers project on the Church Creek Trail on the South Fork of the Skokomish River, a new trail planned for Kopachuck State Park and a Jefferson Trails Coalition work party on the Larry Scott Trail, part of the Olympic Discovery Trail.

And members of the local Olympic Chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen of Washington will be holding their own work party on trails at Green Mountain State Forest, in our backyard.

Volunteers and members of the Olympic chapter of the Mountaineers will be working on the Church Creek Trail No. 871, from 7:45 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Saturday. To join the party, call (360) 754-6551, or e-mail jimfrenchwa@comcast.net.

Recreation Equipment, Inc., is sponsoring a work party to build a new trail at Kopachuck, near Gig Harbor. Work is planned from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Saturday at the park.

For information, call (253) 671-1938, or visit www.rei.com/stores/events/69.

The Olympic Discovery Trail stretches from Port Angeles to Sequim and is planned to reach from Port Townsend to as far west as Forks. Two portions of the trail — about a mile total — will be constructed by volunteers from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday.

For more information, call (360) 385-6364, or email bbbranch@olympus.net. The Larry Scott Trail Web site is larryscotttrail.googlepages.com.

Trail users throughout the state, including hikers, equestrians, mountain bikers, birders and ATV riders are planning projects for the weekend. In addition to the South Fork of the Skok, the Washington Trails Association has scheduled five other events in the state.

Closest to our neck of the woods is a work party on the Boundary Trail at Mount Rainier National Park. You can also help out on the Huckleberry Trail at Mount Rainier, which was severely damaged by winter storms two years ago.

Other Association projects include a weekend work party at Mount St. Helens National Monument, a "Take a Hike" trail survey near Mount Adams, work on the Horseshoe Bend area near Mount Baker and clearing the Barclay Lake Trail in the Skykomish River area.

Volunteers are asked to bring lunch and water, work gloves and wear sturdy shoes. To register, call (206) 625-1367, or visit the Washington Trail Association Web site, www.wta.org.

The celebration of trails "is a wonderful opportunity for people to connect with their public lands," said Lauren Braden, Association communications director. "Grab your backpack and take a hike to one of our national forest trails."

Other projects on tap Saturday include upgrading trails at Tacoma's Point Defiance Park, and several chapters of Backcountry Horsemen working in Grays Harbor, Elbe, Twisp and Okanogan. Volunteers will be working on trails on Whidbey Island, on the Iron Goat Trail near Stevens Pass, and the Klickitat Rail Trail in the Columbia Gorge.

The American Hiking Society first celebrated National Trails Day in 1993, and last year the event drew more than 1,100 registered events in 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Canada, Guam and the Virgin Islands.

The Outdoor Industry Association estimates that in 2006, more than 76 million people in the U.S. hiked on more than 200,000 miles of trails throughout the nation. In addition, more than 40 million Americans are trail runners, 13.5 million go backpacking and 10 million are cross-country skiers.

For a complete list of registered National Trails Day events in the state and contact information, visit www.americanhiking.org.



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