The Puyallup Riverwalk continues to grow as a virtual outdoor art gallery

by Bill Hilton, Trail Line News

Those who enjoy using the Puyallup Riverwalk Trail will soon take notice of a local well known wood carver, Jason Smathers, carving a tree trunk into a “work of art” near the 5th Street NE Trailhead.

Smathers, a 1995 graduate of Orting High School and unique chainsaw wood carver has previously utilized his talents to curve tree trunks along the Foothills Trail for the Buckley and Orting communities.

Money for the project is being raised and donated by a local group of volunteers, Friends of the Riverwalk present tree carving artist Jason Smathers, of Bonney Lake, with a down payment on the tree trunk carving project near the 5th Street SE Trailhead.

Photo By Diane Kastama

by buzz Grant, Coalition President

President’s Message

The January 2012 snow and ice storm is over and now all that is left to do is to clean up the mess, and a big one it is!

Pierce County Parks and Recreation (PCPR) had the entire paved portion of the Foothills Trail from Puyallup to South Prairie cleared of trees and debris by the middle of February. The Buckley Kiwanis and City of Buckley cleared the paved Buckley portion of the Trail. The PCPR and the Buckley Kiwanis did a great job and we extend a hearty THANKS to all involved. Also, a thank you to individuals who went out on their own to clear and cut some of the downed trees.

The Foothills Rails-to-Trails Coalition with assistance from the Back Country Horsemen of Washington maintain the undeveloped portions of the Trail owned by Pierce County between Buckley and South Prairie.

Volunteers from both organizations do this labor with volunteer work parties, generally on weekends.

On January 23rd I drove the roadway alongside the Trail, and a few times actually drove on the trail between South Prairie and Puyallup to assess damage for PCPR and our volunteers. There were areas as long a quarter mile on the Trail which were a real mess to clean up due to the high number of fallen trees.

Prior to the snow and freezing rain a work party schedule was

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2011 Work Party-Party

by Buzz Grant, Coalition President

On Saturday, January 21, 2012, half of Pierce County was without power, roads were closed, and trees were down everywhere. We had our annual work party potluck scheduled that night at Robin and Don Parrington’s home. You may be wondering did we reschedule due to the weather and road conditions? No, not this group. The Parrington’s power was off but we had candles, lanterns, a wood stove and that was the way it was. Access to their residence from Sumner was all but closed off with trees strewn across the roadway.

There was an open invitation for 20 to 30 people to attend, and fortunately 10 people were able to attend. We had a great time sharing stories about our Trail and others as well as accomplishments over the years. It was a great night overall and I only wish more people had been able to attend the gathering.

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Mission:
The mission of the Foothills Rails-to-Trails Coalition is to assist Pierce County communities in building, maintaining, and promoting anetwork of safe, non-motorized trails that provide healthy recreation and transportation options.

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TWBC Government Affairs Report

by Bob Myrick, Tacoma Wheelmen Bicycle Club (TWBC)

During the January 3rd meeting of the TWBC the following items were discussed:

1. Most cyclists are cautious when negotiating the Bay Street Curve near the Puyallup Tribe of Indians complex while travelling between the cities of Puyallup and Tacoma. The city of Puyallup is considering extending the Riverwalk Trail about a mile downstream to the Melroy Bridge. Some months ago, I determined that bike lanes could be installed headed toward Puyallup which would require small retaining walls. More recently, I determined bike lanes could easily be installed on the curves headed toward Tacoma and requested these lanes become part of the Tacoma Mobility Plan.

2. The TWBC has written a case statement for the Eatonville to Pack Forest Trail (Bud Blanchard Trail). We are working with some Foothills Rails-to-Trails Coalition members to try and assist Eatonville with gathering enough money to fully use their State grant.

3. I observed a “sharrow” in Sumner located south of the library on the way to the Riverwalk Trail. Sharrows or shared-lane markings are usually represented by a symbol consisting of a bicycle with two chevron markings above the bicycle. The sharrow is meant to alert motorists of the location bicyclists are likely to occupy on a roadway and to assist bicyclists with lateral positioning in a shared lane.

4. I attended a recent meeting of the Tacoma Planning Commission where they approved the Mobility Improvement Plan which includes three bicycle boulevards which work will begin on in 2012. I was pleased to see members of the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee in attendance supporting the proposed improvements.

5. The TWBC still does not have either a Vice-President or a Special Events Director. We are experiencing low turnout at some of our regular events and also need more participation and volunteers to stage our major events. A discussion has begun about the club’s future and your input is welcomed so please contact any of our officers or committee head with your suggestions.

I am sitting here waiting for the ice/snow mix to melt so I can get out on my bike. I have been resting my cycling legs for a week now. Think about going on the club trip to Sacramento in April. It looks like a great venue and staying in an old mansion hostel isn’t bad either. As a bonus, you can even take Amtrak to get there.

The next TWBC Government Affairs meeting will be the first Tuesday of the month at the Harvester Restaurant in the Stadium District at First and Tacoma Avenues. Start time is 6 p.m.

ForeverGreen Update

by Jane A. Moore, DM, Executive Director, ForeverGreen Council

At the February meeting, the ForeverGreen board adopted short term goals and objectives for 2012. As has been the case in recent years, the most visible project will be to host a Pierce County Trails Conference in the fall. We will continue to work behind the scenes with many jurisdictions, organizations, and individuals to help address problem areas, missing links, and other trail priorities. We will provide letters of support or testimony at hearings to support proposed ordinances related to trails or active transportation. ForeverGreen will also work to improve outreach, communication, and public relations with Pierce County communities, trail advocates, and supporters.

Over the past few months, the ForeverGreen Council has welcomed several new board members. Newest members include Pierce County Council Member Rick Talbert; Bob Myrick from Tacoma Wheelmen’s Bicycle Club and the Mount Tahoma Trails Association; and Chris Beale, associate planner for the City of Puyallup and chair of the Pierce County Coalition for Active Transportation.

We look forward to another active year of work to achieve our vision of a countywide system of trails connecting all of Pierce County’s communities.
Networking for Trails:

Fennel Creek Trail
by Gary Leaf

We expect to begin soliciting construction bids for the first mile of trail this Spring. This project is funded by WSDOT, USDOT, and the City of Bonney Lake under the Safe Routes to School program.

Edgewood Interurban Trail
by Diane Kerlin

The first phase of the Edgewood Interurban Trail is open and being enjoyed by trail users especially on good weather days. All preliminary requirements are being put into place for the start of construction on the trailhead park on 114th Avenue, just north of Jovita Boulevard.

3rd Annual Families in Motion Day
by Bill Hilton, Editor, Trail Line News

For those persons and families looking for something healthy and exciting to do on Saturday, April 28, 2012, in Puyallup, the “3rd Annual Families in Motion Day” event will take place from 10am to 2pm along the Puyallup Riverwalk Trail.

Friends of the Riverwalk, which is affiliated with the Foothills Rails-to-Trails Coalition, is once again partnering with the city of Puyallup and others to make the event enjoyable for participants of all ages.

A number of activities are planned and early risers can start by enjoying a 10K or 5K walk sponsored by the Daffodil Valley Volkssport Association between 8am to 1 pm along the Puyallup Riverwalk Trail. The Official Opening Ceremony will occur at 10am in the Goodwill Parking lot located at 1200 4th Street NW - just off River Road.

There will also be a number of Booths/Exhibitions from 10am to 2pm; 3.6K Fun Run w/Senator Jim Kastama (10:30am), Family Walk - Bike - Stroll - Trail Hunt (10:45am), Skateboard Exhibition (11am), and Live Music (10:45am) happening during the day’s event.

This is a chance to come out and experience the Puyallup Riverwalk Trail firsthand and enjoy a number of activities!
Preparations are well underway for the 10th annual Rainier-to-Ruston Trail Relay and Ultra event taking place on June 2, 2012, however, Mother Nature is not making things any easier. The ice storm that followed January’s big snowfall knocked down hundreds of trees across undeveloped parts of the trail route between South Prairie and at the starting point near the Carbon River entrance to Mount Rainier National Park.

Don Partington has led volunteer crews on two half-day work parties in February already, but the amount of cutting and clearing to do is truly extraordinary. There are few trail sections where one can walk more than six feet between downed tree trunks. The tractor the Coalition Board purchased last year has been a great help in clearing sectioned logs off the trail. More work parties than usual will be necessary this year in order to get the trail ready for the R2R. To get work party alerts, contact Partington at cedarfamily@comcast.net.

Otherwise, R2R planning is going well. Preregistration is running well ahead of last year’s pace, which drew a record 749 participants. This year’s registration will be capped at 1,200 entrants, race director Rob Hester reports. REI has been added as a major sponsor, which is great news.

One major change this year is the addition of a half-marathon (13.1 miles) and a full marathon + (27.7 miles) events. The half-marathon will go from Buckley to South Prairie on the trail section the county hopes to finish paving next year. The marathon will go from the R2R’s Carbon River start to Orting. More information on R2R is available online at www.rainiertoruston.com.

Volunteers Needed - 10th Annual Rainier-to-Ruston Trail Relay and Ultra

The Foothills Trail Coalition is once again looking to fill the 150+ volunteer positions needed to make the Rainier to Ruston Rail-Trail Relay and Ultra a successful event. This race supports the mission of the Foothills Trail and we hope that you will consider supporting this great race as a volunteer. Here are some details for this year’s race.

The race will be held on Saturday June 2, 2012. For all the details visit our website at http://www.rainiertoruston.com/

If you are willing to help out by volunteering please contact me at (253) 226-5495 and advise what position (listed below) you are interested in and your time availability. We are happy to accommodate your needs and appreciate all the help we receive.

Currently we are looking for volunteers for the following positions.

· Set-up and take down- Help set-up the bell stands and aid stations or help take down all stations. Need to be able to lift up to 50 pounds (12 volunteers)

· Packet Pick Up- Help hand out packets, t-shirts, etc. at the start of each race (Buckley/Rainier) (6-10 volunteers)

· Parking- Help with parking at locations from Rainier to Tacoma (20 volunteers)

· Finish Line- Help post results, check in runners, get drop bags for ultra runners (6-10 volunteers)

· Misc- Help with miscellaneous tasks on race day like shuttling supplies, picking up drop bags, running errands, etc

· Exchange Monitor Captains- Staff and organize a group of people to manage a bell stand location and all required duties. This is a great opportunity for groups of people, or an organization. (10-12 volunteers)

If you do volunteer, please provide me your first and last name and t-shirt size (first come first serve basis). All of our volunteers receive a t-shirt as a token of our appreciation for helping out.

Thanks for your support!
On Monday, February 20, 2012, Foothills Rails-to-Trails Coalition President Gordon F. (Buzz) Grant stopped by to visit with Friends of the Riverwalk members at the Alpha and Omega Coffee House. One of subjects discussed during the visit was the need to find someone willing to assume the duties as Chair of the Coalition Courtesy Patrol. Two individuals stepped forward to volunteer without hesitation and so congratulates to new Chair of the Courtesy Patrol, Mary Colquhoun, and Assistant Chair Mariella Arnold. Mary and Mariella are both residents of Puyallup.

I would also be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to thank Jerry Larson as well for his dedicated service and hard work for nearly six years as Courtesy Patrol leader!

set to begin on February 25th. The goal was to clean undeveloped portions of the Trail for public use and the Rainier to Ruston to be held in June. Looks like we got an earlier start than expected for 2012! During a normal winter about 20 to 30 fallen trees need to be cleared off the trail but this year there were over a 1000 downed trees. Due to the amount of work to be completed on the undeveloped portion of the Trail, three additional work parties were scheduled and it is estimated at least four more may be necessary to open sections of the Trail for use.

Anyone looking for something “fun” to do, please check for Coalition work party times on our website and come help get the Trail ready for everyone to enjoy.

I would also be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to thank Jerry Larson as well for his dedicated service and hard work for nearly six years as Courtesy Patrol leader!

Happy Trails
FTA Announces New Eligibility of Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements under Federal Transit Law
by Dixie Gatchel, Coalition Coordinator for Active Transportation

Hope dwindles as I write this for a fair share of federal funding for alternative transportation in the American Energy and Infrastructure Jobs Act (H.R.7), as passed by Chair John Mica, and the majority of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. I agree with President Obama’s Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, when he says that it is the worst, most partisan transportation bill he has ever seen during 35 years of public service. ALL of the $260 billion appropriation concentrates on highways. How deplorable! Gone is the type of funding that helped build our own Foothills Trail system and similar projects all over Washington State? Historically, alternative transportation has received wide support from both sides of the aisle.

H.R.7 eliminates dedicated funding for public transportation, leaving millions of riders already faced with dire service cuts and fare increases out in the cold. H.R.7 fails to do enough to create jobs to put Americans back to work in vital, sustainable jobs. In fact, the jobs included in H.R.7 are very controversial and short-term. This includes more offshore oil and gas drilling and approval of the Keystone pipeline which would carry tar sands from Canada across America’s heartland to Texas ports for refining into gas for shipment overseas. H.R.7 does not go far enough to ensure that we fix our crumbling bridges and roads. The bill also eliminates all funding for the Safe Routes to School program and decimates other safety programs.

As Secretary Ray LaHood laments, “This House bill takes us back to the dark ages.” The Senate is currently considering amendments to restore some enhancement funding but time is short before Congress takes action, if ever. I’m not holding my breath.

The pessimist in me realizes that there is not much we can do to advocate our cause with the current dysfunctional Congress. However, the cockeyed optimist within me refuses to throw in the towel – there’s always November 2012. I will make darn sure that the candidate I vote for is committed to alternative transportation as a part of a great new transportation bill for the 21st Century. Happy Trails!
Calendar of Events

Meetings:

Monthly Board Meetings:
Open to all members and are generally held on the 4th Thursday from 7-9 p.m. at the Puyallup Public Library, south entrance. Monthly meetings may be rescheduled, so check our website at www.piercecountytrails.org for changes.

Charlie Chat - Weekly Luncheon:
Informal luncheons from 12-1 p.m. at Charlie’s Restaurant, 113 East Main, Puyallup. All are welcome to come and share what they have been doing to promote the mission of the Coalition. No business is conducted even if a quorum of members is present.

Courtesy Patrol Meetings:
Scheduled on 2nd Saturday of each month at High Cedars Golf Course, 149th St. Ct. E., Orting. No-host breakfast starts at 8 a.m. and the casual meeting at 9 a.m. with a free-for-all discussion about the past, present and future of the Courtesy Patrol. Guest speakers and training sessions are often included. Contact Mary Colguhoun at mecolg@aol.com or Mariella Arnold at RAArnold@aol.com.

Friends of the Riverwalk Committee:
We are an informal group of volunteers devoted to the enjoyment and betterment of the Puyallup Riverwalk. Please join us for most Monday mornings* at 9 a.m. at Alpha and Omega Coffee House, 1015 N Meridian, Puyallup.

*call prior to confirm in case of cancellation.
Ernie Bay 253-848-7718 bugtrail@aol.com
Bob Kastama 253-435-1637 kastamaq@gmail.com
Puyallup City Parks 253-841-5447

Events:

Work Parties RSVP to Don Partington at 253-820-8411 or cedarfamily@comcast.net

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Planning a trail vacation?
by Ernie Bay, Coalition President Emeritus

Rambletown http://rambletown.appspot.com/ is an excellent website that features geocoded trail information in their Google Maps. The Rails-To-Trails Conservancy has also been mapping trails nationwide on their trail finder site at http://www.traillink.com, featuring detailed trail information, guidebook descriptions and trail reviews.

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