

Klickitat Rail Trail

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By Steve Jones

This week I went on the upper portion of the Klickitat Rail Trail from the Harms Road Trailhead. This is a great time of the year to take this hike because the top portion of the trail has little shade.

The creek gently flows along the converted railroad grade as it descends towards the town of Klickitat. The trail is either level or downhill all the way to the Columbia River at Lyle.

I think this trail is becoming more popular because I met several people on the trail on a weekday. The day was most pleasant with an occasional light wind. I stopped for lunch at a wide spot on the creek and watched the ground squirrels in on the rock cliffs across the stream.

Pine trees are growing in several spots along the trail and are beginning to shade parts of the trail. There are several places where rocks have tumbled off cliffs and down hills into the trail. I stopped several times to toss or roll rocks off the trail.

Spring wildflowers are blooming, most of them are desert parsleys with either yellow or purple flowers. I saw a few ducks resting in river pools and hawks circling overhead.

The trail crosses over several railroad trestles that have

decking on them so you can safely walk over them. None of them are very far above the creek and there are really no cliffs to fall off of as you're walking along the trail.

After a few hours I turned back and returned to my truck at Harms Road. I didn't see any snakes and I didn't get any ticks on me. This portion of the trail closes between July and October due to wildfire danger and the difficulty accessing the canyon.

Many people choose to mountain bike this trail. If you want to hike the canyon one way you can create a car shuttle.

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Lyle Cherry Orchard Trailwork

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By Rod Hooker

I have worked on many trails and remember some with affection. However, I do believe this new trail – the western loop of the Lyle Cherry Orchard property (owned and overseen by the Friends of the Columbia River Gorge) – has to be one of the all-time great WTA trail projects. And, in a unique environment – a trail along the loess covered basalt cliffs, overlooking the river both east and west.

This is a privileged place to visit and trail making at its

best. First, WTA Regional Manager Ryan Ojerio gets full credit for laying out a really fine and clever track – a requirement by The Friends. This was a challenging assignment as some of the hills facing the river are vertical and one could fall traversing the slopes.

With red pin flags planted along the line of proposal, we followed with tools to carve out a path. Primarily a woodland, this is a dense oak forest where we wended our way by carving a bench and a tread, challenged by roots and branches. Here a well-designed set of trail turns brings one to a lower elevation – a way where the skill and experience in trail planning was admired. If not challenging enough, this new course crosses open meadows where the scar of a trail has to be minimized to viewers below- a narrow tread was required and dirt dispersed. And the complicating factor is the trail had to avoid stands of rare plants, which meant the bypass needed to traverse dense clusters of poison oak.

With all said, once this trail is finished it will be an open secret for day trippers. Coming this fall.

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Eagle Creek Opening Delayed

Again

by Steve Jones. On March 9th I worked on the Eagle Creek Trail clearing off new slides of mud, trees, and rocks. We worked in perfect weather for shoveling, chopping, lopping, and dragging all the gunk off the trail. The end result of the day is that the trail crew restored the first half mile of trail, except for the washout which is till being repaired.

We have discovered the landslides sometimes contain poison oak which had been growing in the sunny patches on the hillsides above the trail. A few of the trail workers, including myself, have had the rash several days later. We are more cautious now and mention it in the safety session held before the work party.

When we were finishing up the day and returning to our cars several of us talked with two stone masons working on the new Eagle Creek hiker bridge near the fish hatchery. They are putting rock facing on the concrete bridge abutments. I was very impressed with their work and how it will complement the existing stonework from the CCC era. One of the stone masons told us his family tree goes back to stone masons who worked on cathedrals in England hundreds of years ago.

The new cause for a delay in the opening of the trail is a large landslide on the access road to the trailhead. There are dozens of old-growth trees and tons of mud that came down the hillside, covering the road, and spilling into Eagle Creek. The Forest Service will take until at least mid-April before the slide can be cleared. The slide will have to be cleared because the fish hatchery workers can't drive to the water

intake for the fish hatchery. The workers monitor the water level of the creek several times each day to ensure the right amount of water is diverted for the fish hatchery. Meanwhile work continues on repairing two sections of trail which slid down the hillside during the last big storm we had in January.