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Dedicated to engaging the public to preserve, protect, and promote the land, wildlife, and trails of the Issaquah Alps, for future and present generations.

Newsletter of the Issaquah Alps Trails Club

EALPINER

May 2021

Get ready to hit the trails with us! The Issaquah Alps Trails Club is hosting guided hikes again starting in June. View our full list of upcoming hikes and events.

Want to give back to your trails this summer? Adopt-a-Trail in the Issaquah Alps and help us pick up trash, remove small debris, and report trail damage. Learn more.

If you want to get involved with the IATC please fill out our <u>volunteer interest form</u> and let us know what you are interested in.

Upcoming Hikes and Events

Friday, June 4th 4:00pm-6:00pm- Forest Health Hike from E Sunset Way, 3 miles

Sunday, June 13th 10:00am-3:00pm- History Hike from High Point, 8 miles

Saturday, June 19th 10:00am-11:30am- Teddy Bear Hike on Wildside Trail

Wednesday, June 23rd 11:00am-2:00pm - Habitat Restoration with Green Issaquah at Berntsen Park

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Annual Forum for Public Lands Part II – Hilary Franz and Kathleen Farley Wolf

Alpiner Staff - May 17, 2021



We wrapped up our first ever virtual public lands forum with a conversation about forest health, and the future of natural resource management in Western Washington. If you missed it, you can watch the video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7zbOXnyOn0

Spring Save Coal Creek Update

Hannah Wheeler - May 22, 2021



The Issaquah Alps Trails Club is working with Save Coal Creek to prevent the development of a 12-acre property along Lakemont Blvd. This critical area is a key wildlife corridor between Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park and Bellevue's Coal Creek Natural Area. Currently, Isola Homes owns the property and is in the process of applying for permits to build 35 homes on it despite the concerns around erosion, wildlife impacts, and increased traffic. Learn more about Save Coal Creek here.

The effort to Save Coal Creek continues. "We continue to believe that the Isola property on Lakemont Boulevard SE should not be developed. We hope that 'No News is good News'" says Sally Lawrence. In a recent briefing on the City of Bellevue's Watershed Management Plan, it was reported that "Coal Creek is doing pretty well... Keeping city streams protected is becoming a more important priority as the cost to remediate streams is much higher than protecting them." This is good news for the group as it indicates potential future investment in healthy habitats over housing developments in this area.

Additionally, the Save Coal Creek petition now has 2,916 signatures thanks to the efforts of volunteers at the Red Town Trailhead. <u>If you haven't signed the petition yet, you can sign it here!</u>

However, the Trust for Public Land recently reported that Isola Homes plans to continue to apply for permits to develop the property.

Knowing this, there is still a lot of work to be done to protect this critical area. If you'd like to get involved with any of these actions please contact Sally Lawrence using the <u>Save Coal Creek Facebook group</u>.

Actions you can take, to support the cause:

- (1) Email your questions about the details and status of the Isola development proposal, to city planner RPittman@bellevuewa.gov.
- (2) Take an hour to advocate for Save Coal Creek at Red Town Trailhead.
- (3) Attend (Zoom) upcoming Parks Advisory Board meetings, June 8 or July 13.
- (4) Work with Sally on a T-shirt design.
- (5) Work with Sally to position a Wildlife Camera with a view of the property, from the east side of Lakemont Boulevard SE.
- (6) Write a news release about the value of the property for public park and wildlife uses.
- (7) <u>Contact Bellevue Stream Team</u> for most recent information about salmon in Coal Creek and see if there is a way to remove barriers.
- (8) Post a "Save Coal Creek" sign on your property or in your car window. Sally can provide a laminated 8 x 11 sign.

Thank you to everyone who has worked hard to advocate for Save Coal Creek. It is important we continue the effort to save this critical wildlife corridor from development. Get involved today!

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Native Plants of the Issaquah Alps: Interview with Dan Hintz

Brianna Traxinger - May 17, 2021



Visitors to the Issaquah Alps are drawn to the trails for different activities, all of which take place within the backdrop of a forested escape outside of the city. While all of us enjoy immersing ourselves in the wooded Alps and enjoy the peace of the local flora and fauna, it's easy to pass through this forested oasis without *really* looking at what's around us. Have you ever wondered which trees, exactly, you're walking under? Or forgotten your hiking snack and been tempted to nibble some berries beside the trail, only to question if they are actually safe to eat?

To learn more about the native plants within the Issaquah Alps ecosystem, I spoke with Dan Hintz, the Restoration Projects Manager for the Mountains to Sound Greenway and an expert on Washington-area native plants. Learn more about Dan--and his plant knowledge--below and take some of his wisdom with you on your next trip to the Issaquah Alps.

Bri: What is your relationship to the Issaguah Alps and the Issaguah Alps Trail Club?

Dan: I have been an Issaquah resident for over 2.5 years and have been working near the Issaquah Alps with the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust for 5 years. I feel so lucky and privileged to be able to walk from my apartment to trailheads on Squak and Tiger Mountain. I visit the Big Tree on Tradition Plateau at least a few times a month and my wife and I love hiking the East Side trail on Squak Mountain where we have seen such amazing wildlife!

I have learned more about IATC by attending forums, reading newsletters, and making connections with board members and staff. The history of conservation in the Issaquah Alps is so important to me and I want to do what I can to carry that legacy forward and connect more people with these beautiful mountains and forests. That being said, there is still much work to be done to restore these forests and make sure there are sustainable recreation opportunities accessible for all communities. I am excited to lead several guided hikes this summer as part of the IATC hiking program, with a focus on forest health.

I look forward to finding more ways to help supports IATC's mission.

Bri: How did you learn about plants and how do you use this knowledge for fun and for work?

Dan: [Native plants] are a job, hobby, and passion. My role with the Greenway Trust is the restoration projects manager, which requires strong knowledge in both native and noxious (or invasive) plant ID. While we do some work in upland forests like the Alps, most of our projects are focused on habitat improvement along salmon bearing streams like Issaquah Creek. It is one thing to be able to identify plants, and another step to be able to understand their ecology and benefits or threats to our ecosystems. I studied environmental horticulture at UW so that is really the foundation of my knowledge, but like anything, it requires practice and constant learning (and re-learning). Right now in the heart of spring everything is so lush and beautiful, but I find myself having to work each year to remember all the beautiful forest wildflowers and other annual and biennial plants that emerge then disappear over winter. It is a pretty amazing feeling to walk through a forest and "know" plants by name. Makes you feel really attached to your environment.

Bri: Can you give us an overview of the Issaquah Alps forest ecosystem?

Dan: The Issaquah Alps are obviously forested, but can vary quite a bit in their composition depending on elevation, aspect, and proximity to moisture from creeks and ravines. We also must remember that all of the Alps have been altered by timber practices over the past hundred plus years. Forest stand ages can vary a lot throughout the alps, and many areas may have less biodiversity with one dominant species of tree (often Douglas fir) coming back after timber harvests in dense, uniform age stands. While these are still issues we are working to improve, it cannot be overstated how amazing IATC and other partners have been at getting land into public ownership and keeping the landscape in the Alps from being too fragmented. The wildlife corridors between Tiger, Squak and Cougar are so important for wildlife. While we rarely see them, the fact that bear and cougar and other wild animals thrive in these hills is very special to me!

Bri: I love all the big trees in the Issaquah Alps. I've tried to identify them, but it's difficult: to a non-expert, many species appear indistinguishable. Could you explain the main trees we'll find in the Issaquah Alps forests?

Dan: I would say there are five dominant tree species in the Issaquah Alps. Three of them are evergreen (conifer) trees, and those are Douglas fir, western redcedar, and westsern hemlock. Douglas fir is probably the most common conifer and does really well colonizing distubred sites with more sun exposure (conditions common after timber harvests). Western redcedar prefers more shade and moisture and can often be found along creeks. Western hemlock is a later successional species that requires shade and lots of organic soil. These are the trees you often see growing on top of nurse logs and stumps.

As for deciduous trees, the two most common are big leaf maple and red alder. There is also a bit of black cottonwood along creeks and wetter areas of the Alps. Red alder is a very important early successional species, and somewhat like Douglas fir, will colonize disturbed, sunny open areas, preferring more soil moisture than Douglas fir. Red alder's are the "rock stars" of our native trees as the grow fast and die young (alders might only live 50-75 years while our conifers can live 500-1000 years or more!). Red alders also fix nitrogen from the atmosphere into the soil which is SO important for plant life. Big leaf maple also lives up to its name and has the biggest leafs of any maple trees on the planet. They are often covered in moss and licorice ferns. It is a great time of year to look at the Alps and see the darker green conifer trees along with the much lighter green of leaves just emerging on our Alders and Maples. I love to look at Tiger Mountain from a distance and ponder why certain trees are growing

in certain locations.

Bri: What about other plants? The Pacific Northwest has a lot of beautiful ferns, which to me make our forests look like the set of a dinosaur film. Could you walk us through what grows under the trees?

While there are hundreds of species of plants occurring in the Alps, there are some common forest understory compositions associated with our forest types. Our coniferous forests often have dominant understory species of sword fern, and/or a combination of dull Oregon grape and salal. These plants usually aren't more than 3-4 feet tall, but can spread out and form large patches of valuable understory habitat.

Then you get into some of our slightly more sporadic, but beautiful understory woody shrubs. In drier forest areas, the huckleberrys (there is a red huckleberry and evergreen huckleberry) are beautiful shrubs with very tasty berries. Red huckleberry also (like western hemlock) likes to grow in nurse logs. Thimbleberry is another flowering/fruiting shrub that likes drier, but sunnier edges of the forest. In somewhat wetter areas, you will see red elderberry, salmonberry, and one of the worst plants to have to bushwack through, Devil's club. These are really to just name a few, the understory plant diversity in the Issaquah Alps is truly astounding, and I haven't even mentioned wildflowers like trillium, starflower, large leaf aves, fringe cup, and many more I am still learning!

Bri: Identifying edible plants requires skill and should be explored with extreme caution, but can we eat any of the Issaguah Alps plants?

Dan: I would say thimbleberry, salmonberry, and huckleberries are the most desirable edible plants in the Alps. You will start to see salmonberries here in the next few weeks. Almost all of our fruiting plants are edible, but how desirable they are can be debated. You can eat Oregon grape berries, but they don't taste great (pretty sour) by themselves so are often used to make a jam (sugar makes everything taste better, right?). Stinging nettle is often a trailside nuisance to people who unknowingly brush against it and all the sudden have a stinging or burning sensation on their skin (it's not poisonous and that feeling usually goes away within a half hour for most people), but it can be very tasty (boil off the hairs that cause the skin irritation first) and has similar taste and texture to spinach. It is also used to make teas and is known to have high levels of vitamins A, C, and K.

Bri: I was scared to try stinging nettle pesto, but it's really good! Which plants are truly poisonous and should be avoided?

Dan: The main berry you want to avoid eating is from our snowberry shrubs. They are the only plant you will find with white berries, which is a sign you should avoid them. I do believe they can be used in the right dose as a diuretic, but probably not something you want to experiment with on your own. Ethnobotany is such a cool field (use of plants for edible and other medicinal and practical purposes) and is something I still want to learn so much more about.

I will add the caveat that while eating a few berries while hiking is maybe not that big of a deal along a trail in the Alps, you should follow land manger foraging rules and never go off trail to forage. Eating a wild berry is such a cool way to connect with nature, but we also must acknowledge and try to limit our impacts on these ecosystems.

Bri: Sometimes plants that are beautiful or even tasty are actually invasive and cause a lot of damage to local ecosystems. Which invasive species should we be worried about in the Issaquah Alps?

Dan: While blackberry is often public enemy number one in most people's minds, I would say the two biggest invasive species threats to the Issaquah Alps are English ivy and English holly. You do see lots of blackberry and scotch broom on the sunnier margins (we call this edge effect in ecology) of the forests (under power lines or edge of trails for example), they often don't escape into forests since there is too much shade.

Unfortunately, holly and ivy thrive in shady conditions. Ivy creeps along the ground, preventing our native species like sword fern, salal, and Oregon grape from establishing. It also really prevents conifers from germinating when there is a carpet of ivy under mature trees. This can potentially have really negative effects on forest regeneration. Ivy also climbs trees and can even topple them if left unchecked. Ivy creeps slowly in forests, but birds love to eat their berries, will perch on a tree and poop, creating new infestations. It is not uncommon to see one lone tree in the Alps with ivy growing on it, but very little present on the forest floor. Birds are great, but they are vectors too! If you know what ivy is and see lone little patches, it is great to rip it out!

English holly is an invasive tree that is spread by rhizomes and also by seeds (birds like to eat the red berries and drop them like ivy). English Holly is really difficult to remove as it can come back from small root fragments. It is a rhizomatous species, meaning roots run underground and send up new shoots which look like new trees, but are actually all part of the same specimen (kind of like Aspen tree groves). English holly is also known to have allelopathic properties, which means it releases chemicals into the soil that can inhibit growth of native plants in the vicinity. Small holly trees can be pulled out, but large infestations are best treated with chemical injections, something volunteers are plugging away at on Tiger Mountain.

Bri: I love plant biology, but I know very little about plant identification and have been trying to improve this skill. How could a novice plant naturalist get started?

Dan: I will be leading several hikes this summer (keep an eye on the <u>IATC Events page</u> for incoming info!)

There are also chapters of the Native Plant Society that often have events and resources to learn more.

This is the best book: *Plants of the Pacific Northwest*! Great pictures, descriptions, and information on plant ecology and ethnobotany. I also like to use the iNaturalist app on my phone, which allows you to take pictures of plants and they will give suggestions of what you are seeing.

Thanks Dan!

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May Supporter Spotlight

Lindsay Frickle - May 24, 2021

Our monthly Alpiner e-newsletter now features a supporter of the Issaquah Alps Trails Club in each edition. Our goal is to fulfill our <u>strategic priority</u> for engaging people in our work through storytelling by highlighting the positive impacts of human connections in our community.



Hedyeh (pictured) on July 21, 2019 on the Little Creek/Military Road hike on Cougar Mountain lead by Steve Williams.

IATC Executive Director, Lindsay Frickle, interviewed Hedyeh Arjomand this month. Hedyeh has been a regular participant in our group hiking program over the past few years and also contributes to our mission as a donor. She was born in Italy and grew up in Iran, but has lived in Bellevue for over 30 years and raised her two boys here. Hedyeh works in investment services and cares deeply about our local environment.

How did you first get involved with the IATC?

What drew me first were the guided hikes. I was looking to get fit and spend time in our beautiful nature,

and a friend introduced me to the Issaquah Alps. I appreciate the free community service that the IATC provides to all of us, to create a group of like-minded people who enjoy the beauty of nature in the Issaquah Alps. That is really the first thing that drew me in -- I loved every hike I went on -- the peace and serenity in nature is so enjoyable and I really appreciate it. Steve Williams, David Kappler, Denice Carnahan, and Ralph Owen were all wonderful hike leaders..

What inspired you to make a donation in support of the IATC?

The mission of the IATC really aligns well with my beliefs, to engage the public to preserve, promote, and protect the Issaquah Alps for present and future generations -- it is near and dear to my heart. I believe in protecting nature and the mission also aligns with my religious beliefs. Most religions have a component about protecting nature -- when you're in nature you feel that you're connecting with a higher power.

Why are public lands and access to parks, trails, forests important to you?

It's important to me because I enjoy being in nature so much. To me it promotes a sense of well being and a sense of spiritual health as well as physical health.

What do you hope the IATC will achieve as an organization?

I hope that we will continue with community engagement and provide guided hikes. It is a big service to people and gives a feeling of being part of a community. I also really appreciate the advocacy work and preserving plots of land that could go into private hands. The IATC tries to acquire lands and preserve and protect them as well as the animals and their natural corridors, like in Coal Creek. The IATC has supported a lot of campaigns over the years to preserve public lands, and I really appreciate that.

How do you see yourself getting involved in the future?

I do continue to support the work monetarily, but I would consider being a hike leader if I could. I will be the first to sign up for the hikes probably!

What are your summer plans for outdoor recreation?

Issaquah Alps guided hikes are what I look forward to the most. My family is looking forward to blueberry picking together, going to the different parks and beaches, and just being outside as much as we can.

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Hiking 101: The First Steps

Ash Lehto - May 24, 2021



Come springtime, flowers start to bloom, birds migrate back to us, and new hikers set their boots on the trails. If you are new to hiking and about to start heading out with this warmer weather, welcome! If your boots are worn in and you know the general idea, here's a refresher for you anyway: The First Steps to Hiking!

So you want to go on a hike, but you've never been, or at least never planned one before. So what does that look like?

You might want to start out identifying if you want to go by yourself or with a buddy! Hiking alone can be a great way to connect with yourself and nature, and focus on your goals for the hike - whether it be peace and quiet or a good workout. But hiking with a buddy can add a layer of safety and prevent the trail from being lonely! Ask your friends if they want to hike, or check out apps like MeetUp or REI Conversations to find other hikers in our area! There are also lots of local hiking groups on social media. Once things begin to open up more, the IATC will also be starting up our hiking program again, so be sure to check that out!

Next, you've got to identify a hike that you'd like to do. Check out the Washington Trails Association's <u>Hike Finder Map</u> or their app <u>Trailblazer</u> to find local hikes that interest you. Pro-tip - on Trailblazer, you can save hikes that you like for future adventures, so you don't need to create your own list on some other document.

When picking a hike, here are some things you need to consider:

- Trail difficulty
- Trail conditions
- Pets

Trail Difficulty - Sure, you can have a fantastic time on any trail you go on, but you don't always want to find yourself on a hike that's so easy you get bored, or so hard that you're miserable and in pain the entire time. The best way to determine if a hike is right for you is to know it's difficulty, and we measure that in elevation gain. Here's a breakdown of what that looks like:

| Level | Maximum Miles | Maximum Gain (ft) | Conditioning Required |
|----------------|------------------|----------------------|---|
| Very easy | 4 | 600 | Recommended for very beginner hikers - short distance will <u>little</u> up-and-down on the trail |
| Easy | 6 | 1200 | Not difficult for occasional hikers - will take a few hours and provide a good workout |
| Moderate | 10 | 2500 | Usually not difficult for regular hikers - again will take a few hours to complete, with a good workout |
| Strenuous | 12 | 3500 | Only for experienced hikers in good physical condition |
| Very strenuous | Over 12 | Over 3500 | Only for experienced hikers in good physical and aerobic condition - could be very dangerous if you are not physically prepared |

If you don't know your own capability on a hike, you should opt down in difficulty rather than up. If you are not physically prepared for a hike, it could take you a lot longer than you planned to complete, which could mean hiking into the night unprepared, and you could get a physical injury. If you aren't ready for a moderate or strenuous hike right away, don't feel bad! Washington has tons of beautiful hikes at every difficulty level, and the more you hike, the more you'll learn your own capacity and develop your hiking physique. Additionally, the faster you hike, the more difficult you can make the hike for yourself!

A good rule of thumb from the IATC: A hiker should have completed a hike in the last few months with at least two thirds the distance and elevation gain of the published hike.

Trail Conditions - What you walk on - whether it be paved surfaces or a rocky scrabble you need to climb up - will have a huge impact on the trail difficulty and the time it takes you to complete your hike. Know what you are comfortable walking on, and dress appropriately when you head out! Here are the major conditions of trails that you'll come across:

| TYPE | PREDOMINANT CONDITION | COMMENT |
|--------|--|--|
| Paved | Smooth hard surfaces such as concrete sidewalks or city streets. | May be easy on short hikes but hard on the joints for longer hikes |
| Gravel | Graveled roads or paths, etc. | May be hard on the joints for longer hikes |
| Dirt | Relatively smooth level dirt | Typical of most trails |
| Rough | Rocky, Coarse Gravel, Lots of Roots, etc. | Good balance and strong ankles may be required |
| Off | Off Trail Route, Cross Country. May be bushy, marshy, lots of obstacles, obscure footing, etc. | May add to the difficulty level and slow down the hike. Good balance may be required, proper footwear definitely important |

Pets - The last thing to consider as you look for a hike may just be whether your furry companion can join you! Determine if your pet is capable of doing the hike you've chosen - if smooth hard surfaces or softer uneven dirt is better, and if the trail will be too steep or long, and if the hike will be too exposed on a hot day. But you also need to keep in mind if your pet is legally allowed on the hike at all. Here's a good note:

- Dogs are not allowed in National Parks
- Dogs are allowed but **must be on leash** in County Parks, State Parks, and National Forests Front Country (before wilderness areas)
- Dogs are allowed and must either be on leash or under voice control in State Forests and National Forest Wilderness Areas

You should always check if dogs (or hiking cats) are allowed in an area before you hike!

Once you've got a buddy or two and have identified a hike, you need to be sure that you have appropriate gear and supplies. You don't need fancy brand items to get outside, you just need to have gear that is both comfortable and functional while hiking. You also need to know what to expect when at the trailhead! Here's a list of things you should remember to bring:

- Permits Depending on where you hike, you might need to have a Discovery Pass or another local permit. You don't have to bring these with you, as sometimes you can buy one at a local gas station or even on-site. For a guide to Washington recreation permits, check out the <a href="https://www.wta.num.needings.nee
- **Day pack** When you hike, you are going to want to carry some supplies, such as food, water, and extra layers. Getting a comfortable backpack that isn't too big (or too small) is going to be a big help when you're sweating and panting on the trail!
- Food & water Whether it's going to be a couple hours or a full day, you are going to want to have enough water and food for the trip. Pack a protein bar or dense snack and at least one bottle of water (a general rule of thumb is one liter of water for every two hours of activity) to make sure you don't get dehydrated or hungry on your way!
- Good hiking shoes Sure, you can hike in tennis shoes or sandals, but having a pair of sturdy
 shoes that are meant to go long distances on rough terrain can make your hike a lot more
 comfortable, and keep you safe! <u>This Backcountry article gives</u> some good starting advice to

- help you figure out what's best for your feet.
- Layers Washington is known for quick weather changes, so you can't always be sure what kind of weather to dress for on a hike. Wearing layers that you can shed as you hike is a great way to be sure you have enough clothing to keep you warm, while also allowing yourself the ability to cool off so you don't overheat. Don't forget to pack that raincoat, too!
- The Ten Essentials Every hiker should have the ten essentials, a variety of supplies to ensure that you are prepared for any rough situations that may occur on the trail. Ten things might seem like a lot, but they can make a huge difference if needed! For a complete list, check out our article Hiking 101: The Ten Essentials.

The Issaquah Alps Trails Club has a list of things to know before you head out on the trail with us, but these are also great things to remember when you casually go out on your own or with friends. People have different preferences of places to hike and what to pack, and every experience is going to be different. So if you are unsure about something, take time to talk with other hikers about their experiences, and of course be sure to go make your own hiking memories - the best way to enter the world of hiking is by first getting your feet out the door and in the dirt!

Planning Begins for New Harvey Manning Park Trails

Lindsay Frickle - May 24, 2021

IATC's VP of Advocacy, David Kappler, and Executive Director, Lindsay Frickle joined Kelly Heintz from King County Parks, Jeff Watling, City of Issaquah Parks & Recreation Director, and Jennifer Fink, the City's Park Planner, among others for a tour of the proposed Harvey Manning Park Expansion Area trails. The group was led by Mike Stenger, Recreation Projects Manager with the Mountains to Sound Greenway, who has been heavily involved in the planning for these new trails. Mike said the trails will be mostly class three range, with a little class four - a natural woodland trail, but not difficult. The trails will feature a loop system with access from a new trailhead on Newport Way. These new trails will also include connections to Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park's Big Tree Ridge trail and Harvey Manning Park.





Support from the City of Issaquah's capital budget will make it possible to build necessary steps and bridges to mitigate impact on wetlands and streams. Much attention was paid to the critical areas to minimize impacts, with special consideration given to wildlife habitats - deer are spotted in this area regularly as well as black bear on occasion. In fact, one of the Woodland Park Zoo's Co-existing with Carnivores wildlife cameras is situated within this Park.

The new Harvey Manning Park trail system was designed in thoughtful collaboration with representatives from King County Parks, Issaquah City Parks, and nonprofit partners such as the Mountains to Sound Greenway, Issaquah Alps Trails Club, and WTA. The trail building efforts, which are planned for next year, will take a village. Issaquah Alps Trails Club will support these efforts by recruiting volunteers when the time comes to start trail building.

Project timeline:

- Spring 2021 Start design permitting process
- Summer 2021 Begin trailhead build
- Spring 2022 Apply for joint <u>RCO</u> funding grant application (Trail building within critical areas is expensive so more funding will be needed to complete the project)
- Summer 2022 trail building begins

The Apparatus

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