

Rivers to Ridges Open Space Planning Initiative in the Tri-Cities (WA) Region

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this application for NPS assistance through the RTCA program is to facilitate a public open space planning process in the greater Tri-Cities area of Washington State. A network of public and private lands across the study area will be identified for the purposes of conservation, because of the natural and aesthetic values they possess; and recreation, because of the access, linkages, and opportunities they provide. Conservation and recreation opportunities will be prioritized. We hope to crystallize a regional vision for land conservation as an outcome of this process that will empower people to follow through and implement the plan.

Planning tools of each of the participating jurisdictions will be reviewed and modifications suggested to ensure that the needed visions, policy statements, and regulations are in place to protect the identified lands to the extent possible. Acquisition will not always be possible, but tools such as density transfers, land trades, and grading restrictions can all be used to protect lands. Maps are critical so that planners, conservation organizations, and citizens will know which lands are important for their conservation or recreation values.

The project potentially links the Tapteal Greenway, a successful conservation, education, and recreation project initiated through a previous RTCA grant focusing on the Yakima River corridor, with important upland areas in the region, ridges that dominate the study area, and other lands along the Columbia River. There is a relationship between the project and the proposed Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail as well as the Healthy Communities Initiative.

Project Partners

Lead: Tapteal Greenway Association, P.O. Box 3007, Richland, WA 99354
Scott Woodward, President, 509-627-3621, woodfish24@charter.net
Mike Lilga, Board Member, 509-375-4354, mmlilga@owt.com

Initial Partners: Three Rivers Community Roundtable (Mike Schwenk)
City of Richland (Bill King)
Benton Franklin Community Health Alliance (Brooke DuBois)
Friends of Badger Mountain (Sharon Grant)
Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society (Debbie Berkowitz)
Native Plant Society (Bob Fortman)
Ice Age Floods Institute – Lake Lewis Chapter (George Last)
Open Space Coalition (Mike Lilga)
Fun, Fit, and Over Fifty (Dave Feller)

Invited Partners: City of Kennewick
City of West Richland
Benton County
Young Leaders Society (United Way)

Invited partners are currently deciding whether to participate. Discussions are currently underway that hopefully will result in these partners joining the process, however final decisions were not possible before the application deadline.

Project Description and Anticipated Results

The study area for this project is anticipated to cover lands in the greater Tri-Cities area, including Kennewick, Finley, Richland, West Richland, and much of unincorporated eastern Benton County. This area could expand depending on who participates in the public process, the lands that are identified, and the level of interest shown. For example, Pasco and parts of western Franklin County might decide to opt in when they learn of this process. There is the potential to coordinate with the adjacent Hanford Reach National Monument as well as Washington State Fish and Wildlife areas. The intent is to take a broad regional look at open space, identify features that define our area and have recreational and natural value, find linkages where possible, and enable mechanisms for permanent protection. The project will also enable volunteers to continue to work with jurisdictions to strengthen regulations and implement conservation measures as well as to initiate fund raising efforts for land acquisition.

The growth rate in the Tri-Cities is one of the highest in Washington state, adding urgency to this planning process. The combined population of Benton and Franklin Counties is currently 230,300 and is projected to reach 306,473 by 2025. The current cumulative population of Kennewick, Pasco, Richland, and West Richland is 168,650; combined, these cities have surpassed Vancouver as the 4th largest community in the state. With this population increase comes increased development of open spaces in our communities. However, many natural features that define our character are currently not protected and are threatened by this continuing development pressure. Hillsides and natural habitats are being developed, trail easements and access points are being lost, and viewsheds are permanently altered. Sufficient planning has not occurred to allow community development staff to determine what needs to be preserved and identify when an important feature is targeted for development. In addition, jurisdictions in general do not have the policy statements and regulations needed to shape how developments occur. Existing development regulations do little beyond minimum State requirements to restrict the type of development allowed on and near these significant natural features. Where such regulations do exist, they often are not consistent across city and county boundary lines. Such tools as land swaps, density adjustments, and grading permits are not available in some cases.

In spite of these issues, the Tri-Cities still has significant natural features including mountains, ridge tops, canyons, rivers, riparian areas, wetlands and natural shrub-steppe environments. These features reflect our unique geologic history, including massive basalt flows and ice age floods. Some areas in the region have already been preserved, including the Chamna Natural Preserve (one of the 50 best hikes in eastern WA according to the Mountaineers), part of the Amon Creek Basin, and other areas along the Tapteal Greenway, which was established subsequent to a previous RTCA planning process similar to the one proposed here. A portion of Badger Mountain was recently acquired and has become one of the most frequently visited parks in the area. But many equally valuable areas remain unprotected. A unique ridgeline comprised of individual hills and mountains, including Badger and Rattlesnake Mountains, crosses the study area. There is local interest to preserve the ridgeline, not only for hiking and other low-impact recreation, but because it is a key element in defining what home feels like in the Tri-Cities. There are other habitat areas described by the Open Space Coalition, a coalition of local conservation organizations and other like-minded individuals and groups, as well as trail connections to link existing trails. There is also a desire to connect ridge top trails to the various river trails to create a “Rivers to Ridges” system.

There is a large potential to take advantage of these features for the benefit of the entire community if sound planning can preserve them into the future. For example, an open space network that connects key natural features can result in a unique regional identity and help improve the quality of the built environment. Preservation of important biological corridors can result in more sustainable cities. Natural open spaces, especially when they provide access to low-impact recreation such as trails and nature viewing, can attract businesses and tourists, helping to stabilize and diversify our economy. Open space

and muscle-powered recreational opportunities are especially important in attracting the innovative 20- to 30-year-old entrepreneurs local leaders believe are needed to drive the new economy.

The timing for this planning process is right. The City of Richland has asked staff to look into initiatives to preserve natural open space. Staff and the Open Space Coalition have been meeting for several months to identify important land areas and review city policies and regulations. A workshop to facilitate discussion between Council and the Planning Commission was held in June. The City of Kennewick similarly has met with its Planning Commission and is interested in looking at open space issues. The Three Rivers Community Roundtable, a group of local leaders interested in promoting business development in the Tri-Cities, identified open space planning and the urban/rural interface as one of four key projects to be addressed over the next few years in terms of preserving the natural environment, sense of place, and quality of life as important aspects of a healthy economy. The Ice Age Floods Institute – Lake Lewis Chapter has recently identified flood features in this area and an effort to preserve these sites and possibly provide public access would support development of the proposed Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail. In addition, the public is ready for this discussion having recently played a large role in preserving Badger Mountain and parts of Amon Creek.

Commitment for Public Involvement

It is expected that open space planning workshops will deeply engage the public in this issue, create a community vision of what they want their community to look like and feel like, and will imbue a sense of ownership and resolve to carry the plan forward toward implementation. A similar workshop process to start the Tapteal Greenway did exactly this by establishing legitimacy, ownership, and public will which has propelled the organization through 12 years of solid and continuous conservation, trail-building, and education efforts. An open space plan will also provide planning staff with maps to clearly show priority lands so that appropriate actions can be taken. The plan will enable fundraising efforts, contributions, and volunteer action. Guidelines for improving policies and regulations will be established so that staff and the public can initiate appropriate changes in their respective governments. The initial partners have pledged to inform their constituents of meetings and meeting results and encourage involvement.

Roles, Resources, and Contributions

Assistance from the Pacific West Regional RTCA office is requested to facilitate partner development, assist with public outreach and help create outreach materials, coordinate the planning team, facilitate planning team meetings, and provide open space planning expertise. RTCA will design and facilitate public workshops to elicit public input in an orderly and respectful manner. Jurisdictions will collectively provide meeting rooms, printing, and mailing of notices and updates. Efforts will be made to meet in each jurisdiction. The intent is for each jurisdiction to provide mapping within their UGAs. It is unknown at this time whether GIS data is compatible and can be shared across jurisdictions. The City of Richland has county-wide data related to the emergency dispatch system, which may be of some use as a backup, if needed. In addition, local Ice Age Floods Institute members have offered to assist with mapping. The Tapteal Greenway and other non-profit organizations listed above will publicize meetings and report workshop results in their newsletters, assist the facilitator where needed, and participate in workshops and planning meetings.

Support for the Project

All of the partners are highly motivated to successfully complete the open space planning process. Conservation groups want to see land preserved and jurisdictions need to know what lands the public believes are important in order to responsibly develop the urban community yet preserve features that define the character of that community.

Letters of support/participation have either been mailed directly or are attached to this application. We continue to look for other partners in this process. Letters are from:

City of Richland	Tapteal Greenway
Friends of Badger Mountain	Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society
Three Rivers Community Roundtable	Open Space Coalition
Benton Franklin Community Health Alliance	Fun, Fit, and Over Fifty
Ice Age Floods Institute	Native Plant Society

Related Strategic Initiatives

This project relates to the Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail, proposed by the National Park Service to Congress in 2001, and currently under consideration in both houses. This study would augment local planning that has already occurred and may provide the impetus and mechanism to preserve some of the sites identified. A greater awareness by local residents of these unique flood features will also result.

This project supports the Healthy Communities Initiative. The Benton Franklin Community Health Alliance, consisting of representatives of the three local hospitals, the Benton Franklin Public Health District, area clinics, and numerous community groups, is a participating partner on this project because of the opportunity to increase outdoor exercise options in the area. Their mission is to assess community health needs and to facilitate collaborative, community-wide solutions that provide affordable, high quality wellness and accessible health care to all residents of the Mid-Columbia. Nutrition and exercise are the fundamental building blocks of health and wellness, yet obesity and being overweight are becoming an epidemic in America. Poor eating habits and lack of exercise contribute to the development of several diseases including four of Benton and Franklin Counties' top five causes of death: diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and stroke. The Food and Fitness Coalition addresses the need for food and fitness education and behavior modification among the bi-county population. The Coalition, together with the Public Health District, sponsor forums and community events to help address these issues.



OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER MS-04
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505 Swift Boulevard, P.O. Box 190 Richland, WA 99352
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www.ci.richland.wa.us

July 24, 2007

Michael Linde, Program Leader
NPS RTCA Program
Pacific West Regional Office
909 First Ave., Floor 5
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Mr. Linde:


The City of Richland supports Tapteal Greenway's application for National Park Service (NPS) assistance through the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program to facilitate a public open space planning process in the greater Tri-Cities area of Washington State. In attempting to address natural open space issues at the City level, Richland has become keenly aware that biological corridors and natural features such as ridge tops do not neatly follow jurisdictional lines. Clearly a regional approach is needed to identify and plan for the most significant of these features and resources. Assistance from NPS would be extremely valuable in bringing the region's governmental jurisdictions, property owners and community groups together to jointly address this opportunity.

As you likely know, the Tri-Cities is one of the fastest growing regions in the State. Our rivers, creeks, hillsides, ridges and other natural features contribute to the unique character of this region and enhance the area's livability. Previous community efforts have helped to preserve some of these important places including the Chamna Natural Preserve in the Yakima Delta, part of the Amon Creek Basin, and much of Badger Mountain. However, many other natural features are currently under development pressure and the community has not yet discussed the potential importance of preserving some of these areas. While there is considerable local interest in open space protection, at this time there is not a consensus on how much preservation is affordable and how priorities should be set. The planning process proposed by Tapteal Greenway should create the opportunity for this dialog but our window of opportunity to address this challenge is short. NPS assistance is needed to move this effort forward in a timely fashion.

The City of Richland has previously worked with the Tapteal Greenway organization on several open space projects and has high regard for the knowledge and dedication of

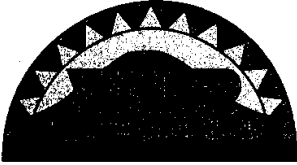
their volunteers. If the Greenway's application for assistance is approved, the City will actively participate in this important regional effort. We urge that you give the application favorable consideration.

Sincerely,



Cynthia D. Johnson
City Manager

cc: ✓ Mike Lilga, Tapteal Greenway
Bill King, Deputy City Manager, Community & Development Services
Phil Pinard, Parks and Recreation Planning and Capital Projects Manager



CITY OF WEST RICHLAND

3801 W. Van Giesen ♦ West Richland, WA 99353 ♦ (509) 967-3431 ♦ FAX (509) 967-5706 ♦ www.westrichland.org

September 7, 2007

Michael Linde
Program Leader
NPS RTCA Program
909 First Avenue, Floor 5
Seattle, WA 98104

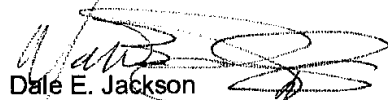
Dear Mr. Linde:

The City of West Richland is pleased to offer support of the Open Space Coalition and the grant application submitted by Tapteal Greenway for Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) to facilitate open space planning in the Tri-Cities region.

The West Richland City Council recently passed a motion to support the Open Space Coalition and its mission to crystallize in the minds of citizens and leaders a vision for open space conservation that protects valuable lands for conservation and recreation, while enhancing the ability to attract and retain the people and businesses that sustain the local economy. The City of West Richland will actively participate in this important regional effort and will appoint a member of the West Richland Park Board to the Open Space Coalition to represent our City.

Your favorable consideration of supporting open space planning in the Tri-Cities region will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Dale E. Jackson
Mayor

DEJ:jr

cc: Scott Woodward, Tapteal Greenway
Heath Mellotte, Park Board Liaison

BENTON COUNTY PARK BOARD

Kathye Kilgore • Rick Kilgore • Skip Gest • Bert Lake • Donna Raines • Hank Sauer

7122 West Okanogan Place
Kennewick, Washington 99336

11 September 2007

Michael Linde, Leader, Partnership Programs
US National Park Service
909 First Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98104

Re: Support for RTCA assistance with trail linkage planning in western and central Benton County

Dear Mr. Linde,

The Benton County Park Board supports the application by the "Open Space Coalition" of the greater Tri-Cities area for the facilitation of open space planning by the National Park Service through its Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA).

The Board is pleased to see an effort toward comprehensive community planning at the landscape scale. Well-planned natural resource and open space protection will result in the preservation and linkages of valuable lands for habitat and recreation, while enhancing the ability to attract and maintain the people and businesses that will sustain the local economy into the future.

Finally, the RTCA Program has a positive history in our community. In the mid-1990s, it was an RTCA planning effort in Richland that eventually led to the formation of the Tapteal Greenway Association, which persists to this day and is the primary organizational driver behind this current proposal for open space planning.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer our support for this project and for your consideration of assistance with planning facilitation in our community.

Sincerely,


Richard Kilgore, Chair

cc: Board of County Commissioners
Tapteal Greenway Association



July 31, 2007

Michael Linde, Program Leader
NPS RTCA Program
Pacific West Regional Office
909 First Avenue, Floor 5
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Mr. Linde:

It is my pleasure to submit this letter in support of the "Open Space Planning in the Tri-Cities (WA) Region" application. National Park Service (NPS) assistance through the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program appears to be a very helpful mechanism for facilitating a public discussion on open space planning. I have reviewed the application with its authors, understand the role of the NPS, and realize that community support is fundamental to success. With that in mind, please allow me to provide some background on the Community Roundtable.

Created some half-dozen years ago, the Roundtable exists to provide a forum for all the major participants in economic development to meet, share their plans and activities, request support from one another, and be stewards of a broad community vision. The Roundtable reports publicly on its progress as accountability to the citizens of our region has always been a guiding principle. Members of the Roundtable include chambers of commerce, economic development and tourism agencies, port districts, cities, counties, education, workforce development, and private business.

On March 8 of this year, a community forum was hosted by the Roundtable to refresh our vision for the coming 5-10 years. Among the key elements of that vision is quality of life. And a major part of that is the appropriate stewardship of our natural environment. Finding leadership for this activity was the next challenge. An important aspect of the Roundtable is to engage already existing entities to become partners in realizing the community's vision. In this case, then, it was the Tapteal Greenway Association who emerged with the experience, knowledge and passion for addressing this part of our vision.

Mike Schwenk - P.O. Box 999, MSIN K1-71, Richland, WA 99352 - (509)375-2614 - mike.schwenk@pnl.gov

Michael Linde
July 31, 2007
Page 2 of 2

All journeys begin with a first step, and it is clear the Tapteal Greenway Association has taken several such steps. To advance all of us in the greater Tri-Cities area along the path of assessing our natural environment in a way that assures the highest long-term quality of life for our residents and visitors, I believe the NPS RTCA program may provide the boost we need. The timing is perfect as we are taking the March 8 community feedback and casting it into a few major priorities upon which leadership and resources will focus. Of course, Quality of Life is a paramount concern. We hope you will elect to join with us by selecting the Tapteal Greenway Association's application.

Please do not hesitate to call if I can be of any further assistance. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Schwenk". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mike Schwenk
Chair

RMS/ksg



**Benton-Franklin
Community Health Alliance**

510 N. Colorado Street, Suite C • Kennewick, WA 99336
509 735-2988 • (Fax) 509 735-3138
www.b-fcha.org www.healthcareworx.org

July 30, 2007

Michael Linde, Program Leader
NPS RTCA Program
Pacific West Regional Office
909 First Ave., Floor 5
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Mr. Linde:

The Benton Franklin Community Health Alliance is dedicated to improving the health and wellness of all our residents. Exercise is one of the fundamental building blocks we encourage people to adopt as part of a healthy life style. As a result, we support efforts that lead to opportunities for enjoyable outdoor exercise.

We support the Taptal Greenway's proposal requesting National Park Service assistance in planning for open space preservation in the Tri-Cities region. Our hope is that it will lead to more established trails and other areas for outdoor recreation. While our staff time is limited and planning of this sort tends to be outside our normal focus, we will participate where we can in providing input at workshops and in helping educate people about the value of these types of areas to their emotional and physical health. We can also publicize meetings to the members of the Alliance.

The recent preservation of Badger Mountain led to the construction of trails that are used by hundreds of people each week. We hope that the preservation of other special places in our area leads to similar successes in motivating people to get out and get fit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brooke DuBois".

Brooke DuBois
Executive Director

Larry Jecha, M.D., President, Alliance Board of Directors
Brooke DuBois, Executive Director



August 1, 2007

Mr. Michael Linde, Program Leader
NPS RTCA Program
Pacific West Regional Office
909 First Ave., Floor 5
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Mr. Linde:

The Tapteal Greenway, on behalf of their conservation, jurisdictional, business, and community organization partners, would like to submit the enclosed proposal for RTCA assistance to help the Tri-Cities region plan its open space.

In the time since RTCA helped the Greenway get started 14 years ago, the Tri-Cities has matured in the way it thinks about open space. There is the beginning of a new awareness of the value of habitats, the importance of ridgelines and rivers in defining our sense of place, and the importance of being able to experience and explore these places. The recent acquisitions of lands along Amon Creek, by the Tapteal Greenway, and atop Badger Mountain, by the Friends of Badger Mountain, have exposed citizens to what we in the Tapteal Greenway have known all along – that natural lands are awesome and that anything can be done by a dedicated group of volunteers with a vision.

Likewise, we hope for a similar outcome from the project we propose to you – to crystallize in the minds of our citizens and leaders a vision for open space conservation that protects valuable lands for conservation and recreation while enhancing our ability to attract and retain the people and businesses that sustain our economy. A vision with public buy-in enables people to move forward to enact that vision.

The Greenway and other local organizations have formed a coalition – The Open Space Coalition – that has begun working with local governments on open space issues. Their letter of support and mission statement are included in the packet. The Greenway and this group are serious about preservation while allowing low impact recreational uses where appropriate. We believe this group is the beginning of a broad network of people across the region that will not only help plan for open space and shape the vision through this process, but will also work diligently to implement it after this process is complete.

We hope to have the opportunity to work with you again. If you require more information, please feel free to contact me at 509-627-3621 or at woodfish24@charter.net.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Woodward".

Scott Woodward
President

P.O. Box 3007 ♦ Richland ♦ Washington ♦ 99354
www.tapteal.org

Advisory Council

Frank Armijo
Bob Ferguson
Bill Lampson
Mike Lawrence
Sandy Matheson
Kris Watkins



Friends of
BADGER MOUNTAIN

— *For Today...For Our Future* —

Michael Linde, Program Leader
NPS RTCA Program
Pacific West Regional Office
909 First Ave., Floor 5
Seattle, WA 98104

July 21, 2007

Dear Mr. Linde:

The Friends of Badger Mountain (FOBM) is an enthusiastic supporter of open space preservation and very pleased to participate as a partner in a planning process for our Tri-Cities region.

FOBM began in January 2003 when a group of hikers, members of the local Inter-Mountain Alpine Club, concerned because encroaching development was cutting off access to our local ridges formed to preserve that access. When we learned 574 acres comprising our major ridge was for sale we named ourselves Friends of Badger Mountain and began efforts towards acquisition. Raising the money to acquire the 574 acres, by prearrangement we ceded the land to Benton County to hold forever as natural habitat for non-motorized use. When we incorporated in January 2006 we stated our mission as: "to preserve and maintain the ridges and other quality open space in the Lower Columbia Basin for the benefit of the general public."

FOBM began working regularly with the city of Richland a year ago as Little Badger, our next focus of preservation, is in the city's jurisdiction. We formalized this collaboration by founding the Open Space Coalition which led to establishing the City of Richland Task Force on Open Space. This body has proven very valuable in furthering efforts to preserve open space, including this impetus to apply for technical assistance from the Park Service to develop an area-wide plan for preservation and the momentum to actualize it.

FOBM would participate in the RTCA program by publicizing, participating in and reporting results of meetings and workshops. One of the first steps we took as FOBM was to form an e-mail list to inform and mobilize supporters. We now have over 700 names on our list. We could reach more by creative outreach to the over 2000 people a week who hike the two trails we've created on the mountain. Special events like a star gazing hike led by a local astronomer, revegetation led by the Native Plant Society, trail building and ongoing trail restoration also draw and involve new people. This gives us some surety we could mobilize the public for input and for action on special projects resulting from the RTCA program.

We are excited about the possibility of having your guidance in the planning process to preserve more of our area's open space. So many communities rue the loss of the open space that made their community attractive and livable because they didn't organize soon enough for that aim. As much as we've accomplished we need help in creating an area wide response to preservation. We want to be an area that is known for its smart growth, linking access to open space across neighborhoods and communities in a coherent and visible fashion. Thank you for the willingness to consider working with us on this very important goal.

Sincerely,

Sharon Grant
President, Friends of Badger Mountain

2104 Briarwood Ct. • Richland, WA 99354 • www.friendsofbadger.org • (509) 375-5705 or (509) 943-8688

Ice-Age Floods Institute
Lake Lewis Chapter



July 27, 2007

Mike Lilga
Tapteal Greenway Association
P.O. Box 3007
Richland, WA 99354

Dear Mike:

On behalf of the Lake Lewis Chapter of the Ice Age Floods Institute, I would like to offer our support to and participation in open space planning in the Tri-Cities region. Our seventy plus members are naturalists interested in the region's unique geologic history, visible features, and their relationships to local ecosystems and man's use of the land. I for one fully support efforts to slow urban sprawl and would like to see better use/reuse of already disturbed lands. I would be glad to work with your organization to help craft some long-term land use plans that can support and promote further growth, while at the same time preserving/maintaining our existing eco-friendly landscape. Protecting visible features of our region's unique geologic history for visitors to experience will help secure the Tri-Cities as a regional interpretive hub for the proposed Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail and other ecotourism activities.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George Last". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

George Last
Chapter President

The Ice-Age floods Institute is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, non-profit organization.
Contact the Lake Lewis Chapter at:
Telephone (509) 946-8050 ■ Email gvlast@charter.net
■ Website: <http://www.iceagefloodsinstitute.org/chapters/lakelewis.html>

Columbia Basin Chapter
PO Box 221
Richland, WA 99352

July 27, 2007

Michael Linde, Program Leader
NPS RTCA Program, Pacific West Regional Office
909 First Avenue, Floor 5
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Mr. Linde:

The intent of this letter is to show that the Columbia Basin Chapter of the Washington Native Plant Society is an active supporter of the efforts of the local Open Space Coalition.

The Washington Native Plant Society (WNPS) has more than 30 years of activity and involvement in protecting native plants. The WNPS now has over 1800 members with eleven active chapters throughout Washington. The Columbia Basin Chapter has over 60 active members. This organization is dedicated to the appreciation, conservation and study of Washington's native plants and their habitats.

Field trips, workshops, study weekends and regular program meetings are offered to Society members. A quarterly publication *Douglasia* has been produced since the inception of the WNPS. Activities such as these are a source of continuing education and fellowship.

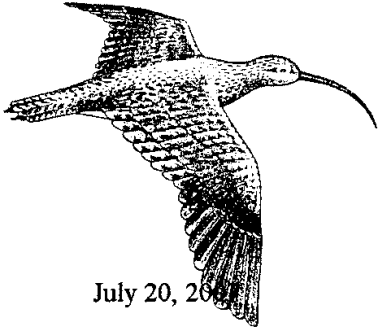
Locally, many members are involved with salvage operations. This involves rescuing native plants from building sites that are about to be cleared for construction. These rescued plants are typically reused in a local landscape where a homeowner is converting from a high water use landscape to a no water use landscape.

We get our inspiration by seeing what nature does when it is given a free hand. We need open spaces in different environments to show us what's possible and to appreciate the wisdom of nature.

The Columbia Basin Chapter of the Washington Native Plant Society appreciates having your support in planning to preserve more open spaces in the Columbia Basin. We will do whatever it takes to keep "open spaces" an important subject here.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Fortman
President, Columbia Basin Chapter, WNPS



Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society
A CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 1900 • Richland, WA 99352

July 20, 2000

Michael Linde, Program Leader
NPS RTCA Program
Pacific West Regional Office
909 First Ave., Floor 5
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Mr. Linde:

The Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society (LCBAS) is pleased to support the goal of open space preservation and to participate as a partner in the open space planning process in the Tri-Cities, WA, region.

LCBAS is a chapter of the National Audubon Society whose mission is "to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity." We were incorporated over forty years ago and have been active in many conservation efforts. The chapter was instrumental in forming "Friends of the Hanford Reach" which eventually resulted in the preservation of the Reach as a National Monument. The Tapteal Greenway Association had its roots in LCBAS. The Friends of Badger Mountain was a subcommittee of the LCBAS Conservation Committee during its first acquisition on Badger Mountain. LCBAS was also one of the founding members of the Open Space Coalition and has a representative on the City of Richland Task Force on Open Space.

LCBAS would participate in the RTCA program by publicizing meetings and reporting workshop results in our monthly newsletter and at our monthly meetings. We will continue to participate in the Open Space Coalition, the City of Richland Task Force, and workshops and planning meetings resulting from the RTCA program. We can also help take and distribute minutes to the various organizations involved in the process.

We are excited about the possibility of having your support in the planning process to preserve more of the open space in our community.

Sincerely,

Debbie Berkowitz
Secretary, Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society, with full support of the LCBAS Board

EDUCATION • CONSERVATION • APPRECIATION

Recipient of the Chevron Times Mirror Award, 1996



July 22, 2007

Mr. Scott Woodward
Taptal Greenway Association
P.O. Box 3007
Richland, WA 99354

Dear Scott:

This letter is intended to express the support of the Fun, Fit and Over 50 Club (FFOFC) for your efforts at organizing a planning process for deciding how best to use the remaining open spaces in the Tri-City region for purposes of conservation and recreation. The FFOFC provides social and recreational opportunities to the approximately 300 people who comprise its membership. A significant number of our events are held in the Tri-Cities area, especially during the winter months when travel is sometimes difficult. As such, we are deeply interested in the wise use of our local, natural resources.

We would be willing to assist your effort by:

- Publicizing the planning process in our Club's quarterly Newsletter and/or in the e-mail Weekly Update and/or on our Club's website
- Participate in surveys conducted as part of the planning process
- Participate in any public information campaigns

Thank you for being willing to undertake this effort on behalf of all of the citizens of the Tri-Cities.

Sincerely yours,

David Feller
President FFOFC

July 20, 2007

Michael Linde, Program Leader
NPS RTCA Program
Pacific West Regional Office
909 First Ave., Floor 5
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Mr. Linde:

I am writing as a representative of the Open Space Coalition in support of the proposal to the NPS RTCA program to facilitate open space planning in the greater Tri-Cities area of Washington State.

The Open Space Coalition (OSC) was formed in February 2007 as an umbrella organization of groups interested in preserving open space in the Tri-Cities, WA, region. Our current members include representatives from the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society, Tapteal Greenway Association, Friends of Badger Mountain, Native Plant Society, Red Mountain Visions, Jack Rabbit Ridge Preservation Project, Fun, Fit, and Over Fifty Group, Friends of McMurray Park, and, unofficially, WA State Department of Fish and Wildlife and Benton County. The mission of the OSC is "to create a network of undeveloped natural open spaces that preserves our community's hillsides, ridge tops, canyons, shorelines, waterways, and shrub-steppe habitat."

One of the main purposes of the OSC is to provide a means of communication among the various groups interested in open space issues. Another major purpose is to bring the groups together on issues that we all support so as to maximize the effectiveness of the various groups' efforts to preserve open space. The organization seeks "to combine the strengths of its members, establish an overall strategy for achieving its mission, educate the public, and speak with one voice while allowing individual members to implement the strategy in their own characteristic ways."

The OSC has identified and inventoried some of the natural resources in our area that we feel are valuable as open space. We are hoping to have your support in preparing a comprehensive open space plan and in engaging the public in this effort. The individual organizations in the OSC will help to disseminate information about RTCA meetings and results and many will participate in planning activities and workshops.

Sincerely,



Mike Lilga
For the Open Space Coalition

OPEN SPACE COALITION MISSION STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Many groups and individuals in our community and surrounding area recognize and appreciate the unique physical qualities and scenic vistas of the Tri-Cities region's natural setting. These qualities are defined by hillsides, ridge tops, canyons, shorelines and waterways, all of which were created by numerous events in our unique geologic history. They are also defined by our shrub-steppe habitat with its distinctive flora and fauna.

Many of these naturally occurring landforms and features are world class in their quality, natural integrity, and history. They enhance our visual experience as we drive from one place to another throughout our community. We view these special and unique features daily from our backyards, our office windows, and our shopping plazas. They not only define the character of our community but also contribute in a powerful way to the high quality of life we all enjoy.

Most of these natural features are subject to future development. At present, the policies, plans, and regulations to protect and preserve these features are insufficient or non-existent. One by one these undeveloped natural open spaces are disappearing and are being forever altered. A number of groups have been working independently in an effort to preserve these open spaces. We believe that the time is now to start a coordinated community-wide effort to maximize the effectiveness of these efforts.

THE OPEN SPACE COALITION

The Open Space Coalition (OSC) has been created to serve as an umbrella organization for the organizations in the Tri-Cities region working on natural open space and open space-related missions. There have been some notable successes in the preservation of special open spaces in our community, e.g., the Hanford Reach, Badger Mountain, and portions of Amon Creek. Organizations and individuals who share the stated purpose and mission and wish to contribute to the preservation of our region's special landforms, natural features, and habitats are welcome to participate.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Open Space Coalition is to create a network of undeveloped natural open spaces that preserves our community's hillsides, ridge tops, canyons, shorelines, waterways, and shrub-steppe habitat.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Open Space Coalition is to unite member organizations and individuals to accomplish the stated mission. The organization seeks to combine the strengths of its members, establish an overall strategy for achieving its mission, educate the public, and speak with one voice while allowing individual members to implement the strategy in their own characteristic ways.

The primary challenge of the Open Space Coalition is to identify and inventory the natural resources that are valuable as open space. Once identified, a comprehensive open space plan will be prepared. The Open Space Coalition will then work with private land owners, local governments, and other public and private entities to dedicate and/or acquire these resources, creating a network of natural habitats, trails, vistas, and shorelines for future generations to enjoy.

DESIRED OUTCOME

We are fortunate to share in a healthy economy. As our community grows, we have many opportunities to shape the future character of our urban areas. If we are diligent and thoughtful in managing this growth, these special landforms and features can continue to define our community and enhance economic development, as they have in the past, long into the future.

Our challenge is to work toward a future urban environment which highlights and respects our landscape and assures that our community can continue to enjoy and appreciate our hillsides, ridge tops, canyons, shorelines, waterways, and natural habitats.