



# Tapteal Greenway

Conservation-Education-Recreation on the Lower Yakima River Since 1995

## Tapteal Talk

### *President's Message*

*Dirk Peterson, President*

#### **Conservation: Acquisition, Restoration and Stewardship**

The three pillars of our mission are conservation, education and recreation. The ultimate goal of the latter two is really to promote conservation. The elements of conservation can be split into acquisition, restoration and stewardship. Acquisition could be the purchase of land or of a conservation easement. This is difficult as you need available land at an affordable price, the corresponding funds and a willing seller. We have succeeded in some land acquisitions. The most notable being the two purchases in 2007 and 2008 that became Amon Creek Natural Preserve. A more recent example would be the purchase of a bit less than four acres from Hayden Homes to provide a buffer between Amon Creek Natural Preserve and the Clearwater Creek development. A pleasant side benefit of that purchase was the recent donation of a roughly seven acre parcel to us from Hayden Homes (the Tapteal Tract located adjacent to the BPA substation).

Restoration and stewardship is all about taking care of the land you have conserved. The latter is what we routinely do year in and year out. Restoration is a more intense effort to try to return disturbed land to a more natural state (if you intentionally disturbed the land this is referred to as mitigation). We currently are involved with four major restoration projects. One involves a portion of the buffer we purchased from Hayden Homes. A sub-contractor working on clearing land for Hayden Homes mistakenly stripped the vegetation from a portion of the land we were to purchase. With funds from an insurance settlement we hired WildLands to perform the restoration work (this is the fenced off area along the northwest edge of Clearwater Creek). The initial restoration effort has been very successful and we recently had WildLands plant about one hundred forbs in the area. We have also hired WildLands to perform restoration on a strip of land in the Tapteal Tract. We received the property in late December so planting will be performed next fall.



Planting a sagebrush seedling in the Amon Creek Natural Preserve restoration area



The completed Grayhawk Garden



A new Snow Buckwheat plant in the Grayhawk Garden

**President's Message (Continued)**

Our other two current restoration efforts were both Eagle Scout projects. Last fall we planted about 100 native plants in what we refer to as the Grayhawk Garden. This is part of the Grayhawk subdivision in the Horn Rapids development on a tract of land that was completely graded over by the developer. About half of this tract became a landscaped storm water infiltration feature. The other half was left bare. We are trying to revegetate the bare area in bite size chunks.

The second Eagle Scout project was along the east side of the creek in Amon Creek Natural Preserve. The area was the site of a previous restoration effort about ten years ago. The current project removed dead plants, cages and patches of landscape fabric and then added thirty shrubs. This effort highlighted the need to monitor and revisit restoration projects. We were surprised to discover that a number of plants had grown through the cages that had been placed around them when they were planted. We have discovered a similar problem with the cages placed around cottonwood trees planted adjacent to Amon Creek.

Given the difficulty of acquiring new open space for conservation we have placed a renewed emphasis on restoration efforts for the open space we already have. Our approach to native planting is labor intensive as it involves hand weeding and supplemental watering (that is why I am very happy when it rains). In addition to maintaining our ongoing restoration sites we have submitted a Park Partnership project proposal to the City of Richland to fund additional planting adjacent to the Grayhawk Garden. If approved we will be performing prep work this spring and planting in November. Please get in touch with us if you would like to help with these efforts (taptealgreenway@gmail.com).

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**KID Work in Amon Creek Natural Preserve**

Last month Kennewick Irrigation District began a construction project on their irrigation pond beside the west fork of Amon Creek. They are increasing the capacity of the pond and replacing the existing pump house. Construction vehicle access is from the west along the graveled sewer line. The project should be completed before the start of irrigation season in early April. They will also be installing a new pipeline that will cross Amon Creek Natural Preserve. Work on the pipeline has just been started. The pipeline will be installed under the trail indicated in the image. This is a wide and highly eroded trail. The pipeline work will stay within the existing footprint of the trail and following installation of the pipeline, the trail will be improved. The trail will be closed during this work. Trail users will need to detour to the trail to the west and use caution when passing through the construction zone. See pictures above.



KID Construction Zone and Road



The Trail Closure is indicated by the blue line

## Earth Day Trail Project

By Dirk Peterson

We have a trail repair project that we were hoping to tackle the week of Earth Day, April 20 to 25. Due to present health safety advisories, these dates need to be changed. Work days will be determined in the near future. The project is located on the west edge of the Horn Rapids development along a section of the Tapteal Trail. There is a portion of trail that has eroded away over the past couple years. To fix it we will need to construct a 16' wide retaining wall out of 6"x6"x8' pressure treated timbers and add about six yards of fill material. It is a little more than a quarter mile along the trail from where we will have material staged to the project site. We will rent a tracked concrete buggy to move materials (a section of the trail is deep, loose sand). We will need people at the staging site to load the buggy as well as at the trail site to build and backfill the retaining wall. We are currently scheduling volunteer groups from various businesses in the afternoons, but will need additional volunteers to fill in the schedule. If you are interested in helping, let us know when you would be available by sending an email to [taptealgreenway@gmail.com](mailto:taptealgreenway@gmail.com). This project is funded by a portion of last year's REI grant.



This is part of the trail that needs to be repaired.



The project site is next to the old irrigation canal at the west edge of the Horn Rapids development.



An example of a smaller retaining wall under construction.

## It's Birding Time!!

By Mike Lilga

Spring has sprung and you know what that means. It means Sandhill Cranes and Say's Phoebes are back – along with other migrants revisiting and passing through the Mid-Columbia. But how on earth do you know one little-brown-job from the next and where would you go to find them? Let's look at some basics of birding, a good hobby to practice social distancing (if done according to CDC rules) and TV-distancing (which is really good for your health right now).

There are some really good resources out there that give more information than I have room to repeat. The National Audubon Society's website at [www.audubon.org/birding](http://www.audubon.org/birding) and the "Get Outside" tab has helpful tutorials on how to start birding, rules of etiquette, safety, and bird identification. There are recommendations on what binoculars to get that fit your budget and, when you get more serious, what spotting scope to buy to really see the beauty of that mystery bird in the top of the tree. I recommend you download Audubon's bird ID app to your phone. It's free; has photos, descriptions, calls, and range maps of over 800 species; and links seamlessly with eBird, which gives you birding locations and bird IDs reported by experienced birders in our area.

When you see a bird, narrow your identification possibilities by first classifying it into a bird family. It's helpful to recognize whether the unknown bird is some kind of duck, a sparrow-like bird, a hawk, etc., and narrow down from there. Is the bird the size of a house finch, a robin, a crow? Learn the common birds first so that it's easier to realize there is a new bird in front of you. Color, patterns of color, and markings help you nail the ID. While you're at it, listen to the call and note its behavior so you can ID it twice as fast next time.

The Tapteal Greenway was established, in part, to protect and be good stewards of habitats for birds and other wildlife. Birds are everywhere, but there are several really good public parks along the Yakima River that are great for birding and hiking. Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society leads a field trip the first Saturday of each month at Bateman Island, a local hot spot. The Yakima Delta, Chamna Natural Preserve, Amon Creek Natural Preserve, W.E. Johnson Park, and Horn Rapids County Park are a few other special points of interest to practice your birding and social distancing skills. Or, if you are sheltering in place, look out your window at home and start working on a backyard bird list that will be the envy of your friends. Happy Birding!



**2020 REI GRANT****WE NEED YOUR VOTE!!**

REI has a program every year that allows their local stores to nominate a few nonprofits to apply for a grant. We received our first REI grant in 2003 to purchase trail working tools. Since then we have received a total of twelve REI grants. These grants funded projects in Chamna Natural Preserve, Amon Creek Natural Preserve, WE Johnson Park as well as along the Tapteal Trail and Tapteal Water Trail. If you see a sign or kiosk we have installed, it was almost certainly purchased with funds from an REI grant.

We have been invited to apply for a grant again this year. We are requesting a grant to help replace missing and vandalized signs along the Tapteal Water Trail as well as replacing some existing signs with larger versions for better visibility.

The grant process has evolved over the past two years. This year when REI members make an in-store purchase between April 8 and May 3 (or pick up an online order in-store), they will receive a token at the register. The token will be used to choose between three local stewardship projects via an in-store display. Ours will be one of those three projects. We will receive a base grant amount with additional funds distributed among the three projects based on the results of the in-store voting. The more votes we receive, the larger will be the grant we receive.

After making your REI purchase, in addition to voting for us please be sure to bring in your snack wrappers for recycling. Clean, individual, multipack and family-size snack bags and wrappers, including chip, candy and granola wrappers are all accepted at the "Subaru Loves the Earth" TerraCycle bin.

**Pamela and Scott Woodard Conservation Scholarship**

April 30 is the application deadline for the Pamela and Scott Woodward Conservation Scholarship to be awarded for the 2020-21 academic year. This year the award has been increased to \$2,000. This merit based scholarship will support college students (entering, current and graduate) with a demonstrated commitment to natural resources conservation through their coursework and/or community involvement. Applicants must be a resident of Benton or Franklin County and be accepted, or currently enrolled, as a full-time student at an accredited college or university in Washington State (see application for full eligibility requirements).

Applications are available on the Three Rivers Community Foundation and Tapteal Greenway websites (3rcf.org under News & Resources / Press Releases and Scholarship Applications and tapteal.org under Woodward Scholarship). The scholarship is also listed on theWashBoard.org.

## Tapteal Greenway Land Trail Thru-Hike

Diana McPherson

~ **RESCHEDULED** ~

We were planning to lead the 23 mile "Thru-Hike" along the Tapteal Greenway land trail on March 28, but due to the developments of COVID-19 and school closures, we thought it best to postpone this activity. Even though we will be outside, it may be difficult to keep the recommended personal space of 6 feet for a group of 20 people.

We will reschedule the thru-hike for **May 16**. We will re-evaluate the conditions at the end of April.

In the meantime, I'm providing a list of gear to prep and a pre-hike suggestion for getting yourself ready to walk 23 miles.

Please take care of yourselves and your loved ones.

### Gear:

- ~ Good shoes are a must. We will cover various terrain including sand, gravel, asphalt, and sidewalk.
- ~ Good socks. Bring an extra pair to swap halfway along the hike. Also suggested is to wear hiking liner socks or a pair of knee-high stockings. This will help to wick moisture away and minimize friction to help prevent blisters.
- ~ Layered clothing. It'll be pretty cool at the start of the hike, but quickly warms up. Also, no shorts. Wear long pants that can be tucked into your socks and a light long sleeve. This is for tick bite prevention.
- ~ Hat with a brim and neck flap, if you have one.
- ~ Sunscreen
- ~ Bug spray
- ~ Water
- ~ Snacks
- ~ Flashlight or headlamp. It will be dark when we arrive and start hiking.
- ~ Portable phone charger
- ~ Backpack
- ~ Trekking poles (optional)

### Pre-Hike information:

In preparation for this hike, we suggest adding some mileage to your regular walk/hike routine. Increase weekly in increments of 5 miles, 9 miles, 13 miles, etc.

### Full Trail Paddle 30 Miles



This year we will be organizing four paddle events on June 19, June 27, August 8 and October 3.

Adam will be organizing a day-long paddle of the entire 30-mile water trail on June 19 if we have at least four people sign up. We have put the word out for this event each of the last several years, but so far we haven't had enough committed participants to make it viable. The full trail paddle takes about 10-12 hours.

The sectional paddles dates are: June 27 – Upper Section; August 8 – Lower Section; and October 3 – Middle Section.

These events will be posted on our Facebook page. If you want to be added to our paddle event email list, contact us at [taptealgreenway@gmail.com](mailto:taptealgreenway@gmail.com).

## STEM Nights

*Diana McPherson*

Every spring, schools throughout the Tri-Cities host a STEM night event for their students and families. This gives both parties the opportunity to learn how STEM disciplines are applied in multiple careers and where it's being used throughout their local community.

What is STEM? STEM is an educational approach to bringing science disciplines together.

**S** = Science - Science pervades every part of our lives every day.

**T** = Technology - Technology is continuously expanding and is used in our daily lives.

**E** = Engineering - Besides designing structures and circuits, this field faces the challenges of protecting and creating a sustainable environment and global climate change.

**M** = Mathematics - Math is used in our daily lives and in every occupation.

Occasionally the same objective may be seen as STEAM where the "A" is for Arts which includes humanities, ethics, ideals, expression, language arts, dance, drama, music, visual arts, design, and media. The Arts strengthen the foundation of STEM by enhancing critical thinking skills and the development of creative minds with the overall goal of creating the next generation of innovators.

Our role at these STEM night events is to inform people of the local wildlife and vegetation along the Yakima and Columbia Rivers. We describe their particular roles and why wildlife and vegetation are important to the overall health of our local environment. We also share areas along the Tapteal Greenway where families can go to walk/hike and be out in nature. Experiencing the environment is one of the best ways to learn about it.

Several STEM Night events have been canceled due to the COVID-19 related school closures. It is possible that late April events may also be canceled. Use this link to view our current list of events and to sign up to help:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0545AEAE23A5F49-stem>

**Please consider helping  
at a STEM Night event**

**The listed events may be  
rescheduled due to  
COVID-19 closures.**

**Evening events:**

April 29 - Marcus Whitman  
Elementary from 6-7:30 pm

**Daytime events:**

April 23 - Bring your kids to work  
day at PNNL Discovery Hall from  
1:30-3:30 pm

