



Tapteal Greenway

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



Our table at the
Race Up the Snake Event



The March 20 cleanup along the
Yakima River shoreline above
Wanawish Dam



We are planning a June 5 event
at Horn Rapids Park

Tapteal Talk

President's Message

By Dirk Peterson

Perseverance

What a challenge the past year has been! The pandemic caused us to cancel all of our normal education and recreation events as well as our annual celebration. The impact was particularly profound for our education efforts as last year we were planning a number of school field trips funded by our ALEA grant. In light of these cancellations our education coordinator switched her efforts to creating virtual online content. We were able to complete some stewardship projects by working with just a few volunteers at a time.

While the near term situation remains uncertain the rollout of three COVID vaccines is cause for cautious optimism. So while we have cancelled our efforts to reschedule last year's annual celebration we have booked this year's celebration for October 15. We recently participated in our first outreach effort in a year with a table at the Race up the Snake event. We have a group cleanup project scheduled for March 20 with the National Honor Society chapter from Southridge High School. We are also planning a recreational event for June 5 in Horn Rapids Park. As COVID imposed restrictions ease we will add more events to our schedule. We are looking forward to a year in which we don't have to enjoy nature in relative solitude!

Grayhawk Garden Phase 2

By Dirk Peterson

In the fall of 2019 Caden DuVall's Eagle Scout project was establishing a native plant garden along the Tapteal Trail in the Grayhawk development of Horn Rapids. Most of those plants are doing very well and we will be removing the watering tubes this month.

Last year we received a Park Partnership Program grant from the City of Richland to extend the native plantings in the same area – see the before and after images. Note that the before image was taken after the planting area had been completely weeded. It is the landscape rock border and watering tubes that are visible in the after shot. All of the new plants have white watering tubes. The black watering tubes were placed in the spring around 'volunteer' plants – mostly gray rabbitbrush. Some of these volunteers are well enough established for us to remove the watering tubes this month (see picture). This year we added two new plants to the garden – sand penstemon (see picture) and prairie clover.

We have applied for another Park Partnership Program grant this year to continue to extend the native planting area.



Before



After



This gray rabbitbrush was a volunteer and is doing well.



We are anxious to see how well the sand penstemon plants do.

Native Planting Project in Amon Creek Natural Preserve

By Dirk Peterson

Last year we were contacted by a Boy Scout looking for an Eagle Scout project in Amon Creek Natural Preserve. After some consideration we settled on a native planting project in a disturbed area next to the Rachel Road stub. We ended up splitting the planting area between two scouts – Palmer Creer and Zachary Glenn. Each scout had to clear weeds, install a simple t-post and wire fence, then plant a total of thirty sagebrush, gray and green rabbitbrush seedlings. A recent visit to the planting site revealed that the sagebrush are looking healthy, but weeding will be a challenge.



Favorite Tapteal Hikes

By Stan Kuick

Hiking WE Johnson Park

One of Richland's least known parks which includes a segment of the Tapteal Trail is WE Johnson Park. This park can be accessed either from Hall Rd off of Van Giesen Street near Wood's Nursery or from a trailhead on Tanglewood Drive. My favorite way to hike it is to start at the Hall Road trailhead by the archery range which is reached by turning south on Hall Road and parking in the parking lot at the end of the road. The trail starts to the right of the gravel road and kiosk. This is an out-and-back hike of 3.8 miles if you go all the way to the Duportail Bridge, and about 2.6 miles if you stay in the park proper. Most of the hike is through a floodplain ecosystem with some shrub steppe mixed in.

The start of the hike takes you through a mixture of shrub steppe with some Russian olive and cottonwood trees on the periphery. Watch the trees for raptors, as Red-tailed and Cooper's hawks are often seen here. Near the beginning, notice the area with the mysterious black sand. I don't know why it's black and maybe I don't want to know! Soon you will be walking through the classic floodplain plants like wild roses and golden currants (edible) which are beautiful in late spring, with perhaps an occasional wild iris here and there. Then there is the section of Russian olives which we love to hate, but they do provide habitat for many creatures. You will then go across the new "causeway" funded by Tapteal Greenway which you will be grateful for if it is the wet and floody season. You will then come close to the gravel road but the trail stays to the left.

The next thing you will reach is a trail intersection with a map sign. The classic hike is to stay on the main trail which bears slight right (solid yellow line labeled "Tapteal Trail" on the maps – you can download a copy of the trail map from our website at <https://tapteal.org/parks-preserves/w-e-johnson-park/>). The other spurs make interesting side trips, but you can't really loop around as the map suggests due to water barriers. If you are on horseback, you can do it without getting your feet wet. You can also just follow the trail signs with the Kingfisher (Tapteal Trail Logo) on them to stay on the main trail.

Further down the trail leads you through the sandy section which gives your calves a good workout in the dry season and makes biking here quite hard unless you have very fat tires. This area has both rabbits and mule deer at times. You then go through a cottonwood grove and emerge at the end of the park proper near Tanglewood Drive. At this point I recommend you continue down the Tapteal Trail along the row of houses and right next to the Yakima River. This is one of the prettiest sections of the river, and has awesome colors in the fall (see photo). At the end of the row of homes the trail has been redone as part of the Duportail Bridge project and goes along the new section of Tanglewood Drive. There is a nice area of shrub steppe between this part of the trail and the river all the way up to the bridge. If you wander off the trail towards the river here, you can find some very large cactus patches, some native and some not, which have beautiful flowers in May.

This trail is never busy so go out and enjoy!



Educational Activities

By Diana McPherson



Tapteal Greenway
"Through Hike"
October 2019

Spring is here and we're continuing our educational program online with #TaptealTuesday. Every Tuesday we'll share animal videos and nature crafts and even do live sessions from the trails along the Greenway. #TaptealTuesday is shared on Facebook and Instagram and all videos are saved on our YouTube channel.

Please let your child's teacher and your teacher friends know that they can access our videos on YouTube to supplement their science curriculum.

www.tapteal.org/education (downloadable lesson plans)

<http://www.facebook.com/taptealgreenway>

<http://www.instagram.com/taptealgreenway>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/>

New FrogWatch Chapter

Frogs are not only super cute and fun to watch, they are an important species that indicate changes in environmental conditions.

Join us this spring and summer for our new citizen scientist program, Columbia Basin FrogWatch. You don't have to be an expert on frogs or toads. Anyone interested in frogs and monitoring our local habitats is welcome to join. Surveys are done for 30 minutes just after sunset at designated locations.

Join our online informational meeting on Saturday, March 27, at 10:00 am.

Please contact Diana at diana.tged@gmail.com for the Zoom link.

The FrogWatch USA program is operated through the AZA (Association of Zoos and Aquariums). Additional online training is required and takes about 3-4 hours. There is also a small fee for the training - \$10 for AZA members, \$15 for non-members.

Junior Naturalist Online Course

Become a certified junior naturalist in our new online course. The course is free, but is limited to 20 participants so registration is required.

We'll learn about birds, plants, and bugs while photographing, drawing, and conducting experiments. Classes are online for 30-45 minutes while the majority of activities are conducted in your backyard. All student ages are welcome.

This course is being held on alternate Fridays on the following dates:

#1 - Friday, April 2, 5:00 pm - Invite wildlife to visit you

#2 - Friday, April 16, 5:00 pm - Birding

#3 - Friday, April 30, 5:00 pm - Flowers and trees

#4 - Friday, May 14, 5:00 pm - Gardens and Urban wildlife

#5 - Friday, May 28, 5:00 pm - Journal reviews and certification

Reserve your spot by registering here:

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



Inaugural Tapteal Greenway 50K

By Dan Hansen

The Inaugural Tapteal Greenway 50K is scheduled for May 15, 2021. The first known transit was hiked in October 2019 by board members Diana McPherson and Sally Martin along with their friend, Kelly Rowlette. They hiked from just north of Benton City to Bateman Island in 12 hours. A Facebook Group called “Bad Ideas with Good People” got the idea to run the Tapteal Trail from the boat launch in Benton City to Bateman Island on June 26, 2020. The temperature was expected to be above 100 degrees, making it a “bad idea”. The high turned out to be 102! A group of eight completed the journey, including board member Dan Hansen and Nomad Trail Runners’ President Jason Reatherford. It was so much fun that an official race has been set up for May 15, 2021 by the Nomad Trail Runners of Eastern Washington.

Follow them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/nomadtrailrunners/>. Start time is 7:00 am. The distance is about 30 miles.

Registration for the race opens on April 4 on the following link:

<https://ultrasignup.com/register.aspx?did=83662>. Tapteal Greenway will host an aide station, likely where the trail crosses the Twin Bridges Road.



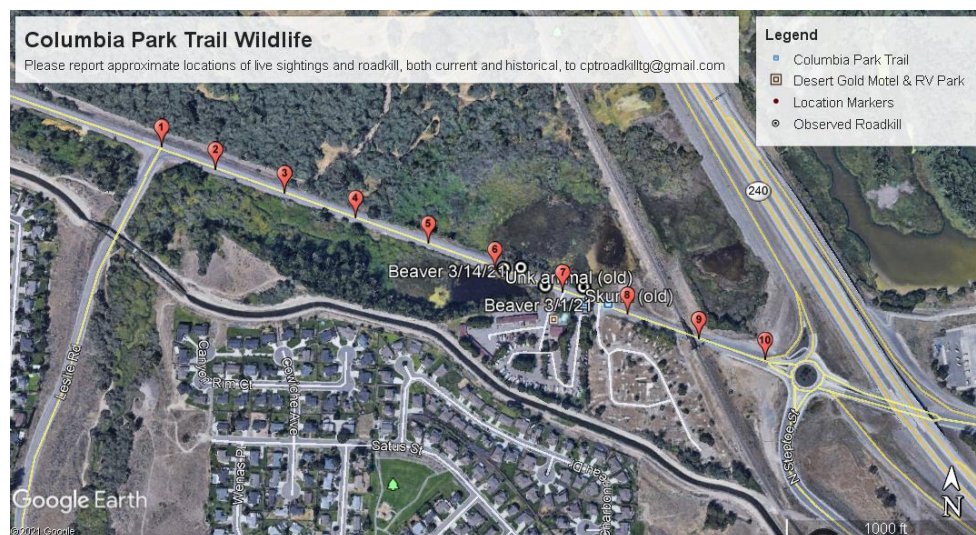
Columbia Park Trail Wildlife Crossing

By Mike Lilga

The Tapteal Greenway board is working to determine the feasibility of placing a wildlife crossing under Columbia Park Trail somewhere between Leslie Road and Steptoe Street. This stretch of road is well known for the high numbers of wildlife killed every year. In just the last two weeks, two beaver were struck by cars and killed. Good wetland habitat on both sides of the road and a high traffic count of about 14,000 trips per day put wildlife and humans at risk.

There are many issues to be addressed regarding the placement of a crossing. We are reaching out to engineers, biologists, and city staff to help us determine feasibility and design. For example we know that there are sewer and electrical utilities that run under the roadway which could complicate or perhaps prevent installation.

As we work through the technical issues, we could use your help to document wildlife sightings. We are collecting current sightings of animals, both living and dead, that you see along Columbia Park Trail. We are also interested in past sightings, to the best of your ability. We want to know where and when animals were seen so that we can better determine where a crossing might be placed to have the highest chance of success and best serve the wildlife that use that area. Reports of approximate location using the markers on the map, date, time, and species if known can be emailed to cptroadkilltg@gmail.com. Any other information you might have that you think is relevant to this project can also be emailed to this address. Thanks for your help.



R.I.P.

A Temporary Reprieve

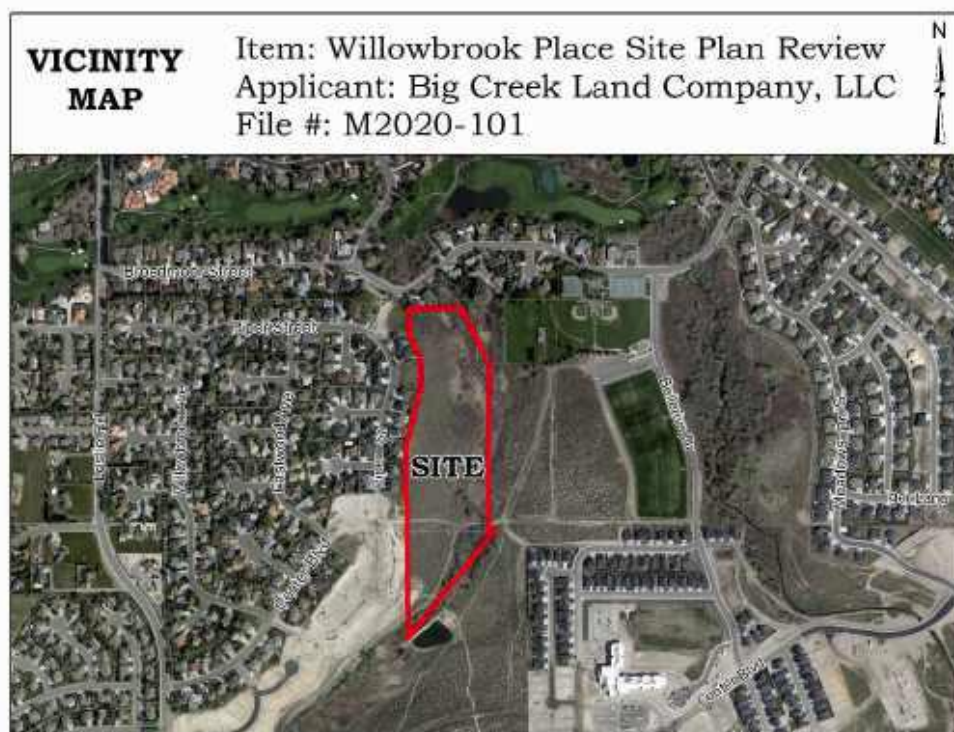
By Dirk Peterson

Last October we received notice that a development application had been submitted for the 96-unit Willowbrook Place Apartments. The development site is situated between Amon Creek Natural Preserve and the single family Willowbrook development (see vicinity map). Applications had previously been filed for an apartment development on this site in 2014 and 2018. Following the withdrawal of the 2018 application the developer purchased two parcels of land adjacent to the north end of the site. Utilizing this additional property the new application included a 26' wide "drive isle" to provide secondary access to the development from Broadmoor Street.

Unfortunately, the three main parcels that make up this development are zoned R-3 (multiple-family residential). This zoning designation was granted in the 1970's when Quadrant Corporation acquired the land that would become the Willowbrook development. At that time the transportation improvement plan called for using the current Center Boulevard as the connection between Leslie and Steptoe. Quadrant sold the R-3 zoned tracts to their current owner in the late 1980's. Sometime after the R-3 zoning was granted the City changed the Leslie to Steptoe connection to Rachel Road. The parcels that became Amon Creek Natural Preserve were acquired in 2007 and 2008. This created our current situation of an island of multiple-family residential zoning sandwiched between a natural preserve and a single family residential development.

The City of Richland received hundreds of pages of comments during the public comment period for the most recent application. Tapteal Greenway submitted a three page letter with our main focus being the applicants misuse of buffer averaging. After reviewing the comments the City placed the application on hold at the end of November and notified the developer that additional information needs to be submitted. The developer needs to address inadequacies in the *Critical Area Report and Buffer Averaging Plan* and the *Wildlife Habitat Assessment Report*; and submit an updated traffic impact analysis, a stormwater management plan, a geologic hazards report, a hydrogeologic assessment and results of an archeological cultural resources survey.

We expect this to only be a temporary reprieve while the developer assembles the required documentation.



Voluntary Stewardship Program

By David Harvey

The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) is an optional, non-regulatory approach to meeting the goals of the state of Washington's Growth Management Act (GMA) by protecting critical environmental areas on private agricultural lands while at the same time preserving the agricultural viability of participating farmers. The VSP allows farmers to have more flexibility than under traditional critical area regulations by tailoring strategies towards the protection of the critical areas on their farms that do not conflict with agricultural production. The VSP critical areas in Washington state include wetlands, critical aquifer recharge areas, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, frequently flooded areas, and geological hazard areas. If enrolled farmers fail to meet the environmental goals of the VSP than that could trigger traditional regulatory approaches toward preserving critical areas on their lands.

Benton County and 26 other state counties have "opted in" to the VSP by designating one or more watersheds in their counties where the program would apply. In Benton County the three designated watersheds include Alkali-Squichuck, Lower Yakima and Rock-Glade. In Benton County the Benton Conservation District (BCD) is the government entity charged with implementing the goals of the VSP by providing technical assistance to enrolled county farmers in determining if critical areas are present on their lands. Technical assistance also includes cost-sharing funding to enrolled landowners who implement conservation practices to protect critical areas on their farms.

Prior to 2011, the main tool to ensure protection of critical environmental areas on agricultural lands was traditional regulatory approaches. Often these approaches were viewed as conflicting with agricultural viability that led to lengthy litigation. The VSP was created in 2011 to provide a more non-regulatory approach. At the time of the adoption of the VSP advisory work groups were established to assist county conservation districts in determining benchmarks to measure the success and shortcomings of the program. Tapteal Greenway is a member of the Benton County work group which represents the diverse interests of government agencies, tribes, agricultural producers, and environmental stakeholders. The Benton County work group, which meets several times a year, recently reviewed the BCD's 5-year Work Plan Report (2015-2019). They provided critical comments and recommendations to the Executive Director of the Washington Conservation Commission on the progress the county has made towards the protection and enhancement of critical areas on agricultural lands.

You may also find more information at www.scc.wa.gov/vsp

