

# Tapteal Greenway

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

## Tapteal Talk

### Prez Sez

By Mike Lilga



Jane Goodall was right.  
Make an impact locally.  
Serve! Reclaim your hope.

I come from the generation that spawned “think globally, act locally”. It’s a phrase that inspired many, like me, to take up environmental causes. But, with time, it’s apparent Jane Goodall had it right – the phrase is backward. She would say “act locally, then you dare think globally”.

In today’s screwed up world, thinking globally too much can be a recipe for hopelessness, inaction, and apathy. Of all she is known for, I think most importantly Goodall was an ambassador for hope. “If you care, you cannot give up. Hope is not passive – it’s about action.” She would tell us being of service to your local community, helping out, making even a small improvement is the path to hope and change. Many people with hope, each making the contribution they can, adds up to a better world.

It’s easy to get lost in the news or social media. I encourage you to reclaim your mind and heart by getting outside. Take a walk through Amon Basin Natural Preserve and take in the beauty of the blooming Rabbitbrush. Stop to look at the bees in the blooms. Observe. Wonder. Heal. Hope.

### ~ Board of Directors ~

*Mike Lilga – President  
David McBurney – Vice President  
Kit McBurney – Secretary  
Stan Kuick – Treasurer  
Members at Large:  
Adam Fyall  
Dan Hansen  
Aaron Pelly  
Dirk Peterson  
Peter Rieke  
Carole Schuh – Editor  
Scott Woodward*

### It's Time to Celebrate!!

By David McBurney

**It's a special year for the Greenway as we commemorate our 30th year.**

We look forward to seeing you at the Tapteal Greenway’s Annual Celebration on Saturday, November 15 at the Richland Community Center from 4:00 to 6:00 pm. We will look at the successes of our first 30 years, our progress this year and look forward to what we want to accomplish in the next 30 years.

As always, we will present the Tri-Cities Conservationist of the Year.

Please come join us, share some snacks, a beer or some wine and celebrate 30 years of the Tapteal Greenway.

## Tri-Cities Conservationist of the Year

By Dirk Peterson

I am pleased to announce that this year's recipient is Kelsey Kelmel. I first met Kelsey several years ago and was immediately struck not just by her knowledge of native plants but her contagious enthusiasm about them.

Her local involvement started with working at Tapteal Native Plants. Soon she became involved with the Columbia Basin Chapter of the Washington Native Plant Society and the Heritage Garden Program at the Benton Conservation District. Somewhere along the line she linked up with Lindsay Gailey and Debbie Berkowitz to participate in their Leslie Groves North restoration efforts.

She is a strong advocate of collecting and sharing native plant seeds and has led multiple seed collecting events at our Amon Basin property. My introduction to seedballs was from a Zoom presentation she organized for CBWNPS. Kelsey remains enthusiastic about the potential of seedballs in restoration projects. She currently is the CBWNPS president and leads the Heritage Garden Program.



## Tapteal Water Trail – Event Recap

By Adam Fyall



June 21 was a successful paddle event!

We held our first of three planned Greenway-supported paddle events on the river on June 21, but canceled the mid-summer paddle due to low flows and Stargrass conditions. Unless and until each of these issues can be overcome, scheduling long distance summer events seems precarious. In 2026, we may opt for two earlier events, perhaps May and June, then a late-season paddle in October. For what it's worth, while the weather forecast was a bit foreboding, the June paddle from Benton City to Horn Rapids ended up being one of the more perfect days we have had on the river in regards to water, wind, and sky conditions.

## YEER Plant ID Day @ Ray Reynolds Middle School

By Mikki Symonds, YEER East Coordinator

In these photos you see Tapteal Greenway directly fulfilling the conservation and education part of its mission "Promoting conservation, education and recreation along the lower Yakima River," and perhaps indirectly promoting future recreation by interacting with students at Ray Reynolds Middle School in Pasco. For the past four years, Tapteal Greenway has supported the Washington Native Plant Society's YEER Program (Youth Ecology Education through Restoration) through funding and volunteering. Through passion and care, volunteers provide students with the opportunity to learn about the shrub steppe ecosystem, their home, and inspire some of them to protect our unique and fragile home.

In these photos, you see volunteers participate in Plant ID day, which teacher Brandon Hoeft has gotten permission to do on adjacent land belonging to a farmer who wants the land preserved. Students learn about the major plants in our area: shrubs and sub-shrubs, grasses, and forbs (herbaceous flowering plants). Volunteers also participate three other times during the school year: preparing a site for planting, planting, and site maintenance (weeding). Being in a school is a tremendous way to share our love for our home and through our enthusiasm to inspire seventh graders to participate carefully in the world where they walk.



Janelle Downs and David Cohoe helped students learn about the shrubs and sub-shrubs of the shrub-steppe ecosystem.



Miguel Orr and Dan Hansen teach students about the various grasses of the shrub-steppe. "Steppe" means grasses in Russian.



Marilyn Lemar and Carole Schuh share the many varieties of the forbs (wildflowers) of the shrub-steppe ecosystem.



This little guy came to visit during the lunch break.

## Amon Creek Community Walk

By Dirk Peterson

Benton Conservation District has been working on a two-year Centennial Grant from Washington State Department of Ecology to study the water quality of Amon Creek. One of the deliverables for the grant was to hold an educational event for the public. We partnered with the Conservation District and the Columbia Basin Chapter of Washington Native Plant Society to hold the Amon Creek Community Walk event on September 6.

A number of educational booths were set up in the Amon Creek Elementary parking lot. From there we staged a series of one hour guided walks to the west fork of Amon Creek. Topics discussed during the walks included storm water runoff, the benefits of native plants and the impact of beavers. It was great working with our partners and the event was well received.



Mike and David at our table



Dirk talking about runoff and the benefit of native plants as a buffer



Kristy (BCD) talking about water quality of Amon Creek



Dan talking about the impact of beavers

### Upcoming TG Events

- Spread Chips on Chamna Trails, Saturday, October 25, [click to register](#)
- Bateman Island Clean-up, Saturday, November 1, 2025, 9:00 to noon, [click to register](#)
- Annual Celebration, Richland Community Center, Saturday, November 15, 2025, 4:00 - 6:00 pm, [click to register](#)

Sign up to receive notifications (if you haven't already):

Floats, hikes, trail maintenance, clean ups, and restoration work parties: [Click to receive notifications](#)

Also:

[Park tours](#) with Chris Waite, Richland Parks Director

Richland Comprehensive Plan: Visit [richlandwa.gov/CompPlan](http://richlandwa.gov/CompPlan) to learn more and share your ideas.

## The Yakima River

by Adam J. Fyall

It might be hyperbole, but I really do think the right word to describe the state of the Yakima River right now is to say that it is in *crisis*. I want to briefly update three topics just to keep them on the radar...

**Water Flows:** We are in the third consecutive year of below average precipitation and runoff in the Yakima Basin. That means the impacts are starting to accumulate and compound, year over year. For the first time that I am aware, the State of Washington implemented an order beginning October 6 that halts all surface withdrawals from the river except for senior and perpetual right holders. This includes municipalities like Cle Elum and Roslyn. At the time of this newsletter, not much relief is yet on the horizon, though most forecasters are calling for an above-average winter for precipitation. Let's hope so.

**Water Stargrass:** You've heard a lot about stargrass from the Greenway and elsewhere in recent years, and you're going to continue to for the foreseeable future. My personal observations found dense, surface-matted stargrass earlier than even in 2025. When stargrass is able to explode into a 50-mile long riverine forest such as it does nowadays, it changes the entire character of the river – its flow, its chemistry, its temperature, and so on. Water stargrass is making the Lower Yakima River increasingly uninhabitable for salmon – both coming and going. It's nearly impossible for little smolts to negotiate this gauntlet and get to the Columbia, and now returning adults are struggling to get back upriver due to low oxygen levels.

**Bateman Island:** This topic brings mixed feelings. The causeway is going to be removed, and this is a good thing for the health of the river and the delta. There are no silver bullets, but removing the causeway will break loose the warm water impoundment it creates in the delta and allow cooler Columbia River water to better intercept the Yakima and help to get smolts out. The downside is that we are going to lose foot access onto the island. The City of Richland is relinquishing its lease on the property, meaning it will go back to direct Corps of Engineers management. You will need to swim, paddle, or motor over to the island. Deconstruction is scheduled for December.

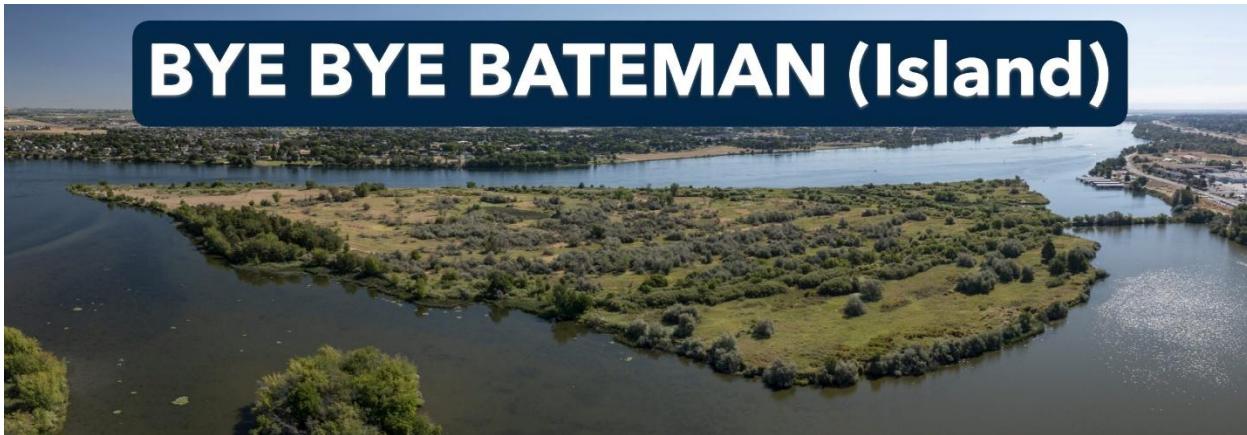
Back to the hyperbole part, stargrass and the Bateman causeway, along with predation and Wanawish Dam are what I call the "Four Horsemen of the Lower Yakima River Apocalypse." Maybe that's a little over the top, but these four issues, individually and in combination, are killing the river.

We need to keep the attention on these issues and continue to address them as thoroughly and expeditiously as we can. Contact me if you would like to learn more about the topics or ways that you can get involved.



Stargrass in the Yakima River

# BYE BYE BATEMAN (Island)



by Scott Woodward

It appears imminent that in a little over a month or so, the Bateman Island causeway will be demolished. While the removal of the causeway will restore the natural flow of the Yakima River, it will eliminate the pedestrian foot/bike path access to the island which has been enjoyed by many over the years. To pay her back for the joy she has shared with the community, we want to send her off on a good note as clean as we can make her. We will be giving back by cleaning up the island, one last time. Please join us for this going-away party.

When: November 1, 9:00 am – Noon

Where: Meet in the lower Wye Park parking lot, overflow will be in the upper Wye Park lot and the Sacajawea overlook lot.

Bring: Gloves, shoes for the terrain and weather, coats that are tear-resistant and trash pickers if you have any. The City of Richland will be our partner on this project.

This event is not suitable for children under 6 years old. If you have any questions, you can contact us at <https://tapteal.org/contact-form/>

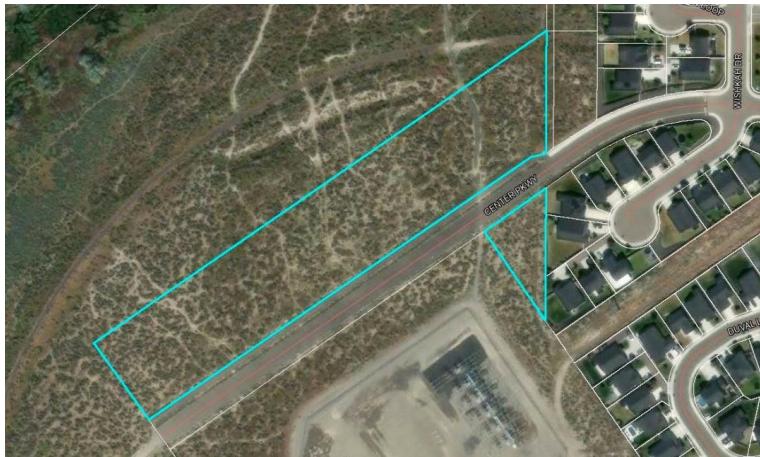


## Sagebrush Seed Collection

By Dirk Peterson

Some background information is in order. When the Clearwater Creek development in Amon Basin was in the approval process, we approached Haydon Homes about purchasing roughly three acres to serve as a buffer between the development and Amon Creek Natural Preserve. In addition to selling us the requested parcels, they subsequently donated a five-acre tract to us (referred to as the Tapteal Tract). Unfortunately, Center Parkway cuts across the property but the rest of the tract is good quality shrub steppe.

In addition to providing a buffer to the preserve, we use this property as a seed bank. For the last few years Kelsey Kelmel has led a joint Tapteal Greenway/Columbia Basin Chapter Washington Native Plant Society sagebrush seed collection event on Thanksgiving weekend. The collected seeds are used in local restoration projects. This year the seed collection will be on November 28. We will meet in the Amon Creek Elementary parking lot at 1:00 pm. Five-gallon buckets will be provided for seed collection.



The Tapteal Tract is highlighted in teal.



Kelsey demonstrates the seed collection technique.