

LOCAL

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PARK VIEWS

Happy Ashland trails to you

By James Lewis

Ashland Parks & Recreation Commission

Springtime in Ashland is one of my favorite times of year. After the cold, wet and snowy winter, now is the time we all get to enjoy the blooming beauty that surrounds us — the bright green hills below Grizzly Peak, the vibrant colors sprouting in people's yards, the trees awakening from a long winter's nap; it's time for us to reap the benefits of all this vernal beauty.

An excellent way to enjoy this Ashland bounty is to get out and go for a hike, which leads us to our main subject, Ashland trails. There have been trails in and around Ashland since its early history, when Native Americans created the first local trail networks, which eventually European settlers then took over and expanded.

In 2006 the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission formed the Trails Master-plan Sub-committee. As a Parks Commissioner, I was appointed to this sub-committee, which included another commissioner, a member of the City Council,

the chair of the Ashland Woodlands and Trails Association, and members of the public. Our task was to locate and map all existing trails, and plan for future potential trail corridors within and surrounding the Ashland area.

We held many public meetings concerning areas of potential trail corridors, and we tried to designate trails that were commonly used by Ashland locals, but which may not have had all the proper easements — i.e. the Ditch trail, the Railroad Yard, etc. We also wanted to plan for future trails along creek corridors within riparian zones that could tie into existing trails, like the Creek to Crest Trail along the railroad tracks and the Greenway. All of the individuals involved worked hard to produce a trail plan that would not only be adopted by Ashland Parks Commission but by the City Council as well, in hopes that the Trails Master-plan would eventually become an integral part of the Ashland Comprehensive Plan.

It's been a little more than 10 years since the Trails Plan document was adopted, and, as it is now time for an

update. A new sub-committee has been formed along the same lines as the last committee. We are now evaluating our success in adding new trails to the system. Much progress has been made in the City's forest-interface, with the Ashland Woodland Trails Association doing an excellent job of not only working effectively with the city, the Forest Service, and private landowners, but also helping to construct the trails as well. Their volunteer service has been invaluable in making trail connections within the watershed. We have made less progress, though, in Ashland's city limits. Multiple landowners make easements more difficult, therefore, many of the easements are waiting for redevelopment of properties in the future.

Our aim with the updated master plan is an evaluation of the original plan's success so that we may make additions and/or deletions, and outline discussions for some possible tactics and strategies needed to acquire easements, and thereby be able to complete some of the trails.

If you are interested in Ashland Trails and the updated



master plan, you can go to the city of Ashland website at www.ashland.or.us and search for the Ashland Trails Masterplan pdf file. You can read up on it and write or email your suggestions to the Ashland Parks & Recreation Commission. You can also look up the Sub-Committee meeting schedule and show up to listen or offer input. If you would like to get involved, you can either contact Ashland Parks or the Ashland Woodlands and Trails Association, and volunteer.

One last thing; after you finish reading the Daily Tidings, get out and go for a springtime hike on Ashland's wonderful system of trails.

—James Lewis is an Ashland Parks & Recreation Commissioner. Park Views appears monthly.