



2026 Presentations

Washington State Trails Conference

Building Trails for Wildlife, Climate and Disaster Response

Keeping Field Staff Safe: A 3-Tiered Approach to Fire, Air Quality and Training

Moleek Busby, Field Operations Senior Manager, Washington Trails Association (WTA)

WTA is the largest state-led trail maintenance volunteer organization in the USA. WTA's volunteer program began in 1993 and works closely with land managers across the state, including city, county, and federal entities. Working on trails in the rugged terrain and wilderness of Washington can add environmental risks like avalanches, high winds, severe wet saturation, heat, and, as climate change is a variable, especially wildfires. The session will focus on WTA's 3-tiered system of training, AQI field devices, 24/7 Emergency Management, effective transparency, and consistent communication. Moleek will give space for sharing engaging questions and share some critical systems and incident reports that have helped tailor wildfire awareness, support, and training for successful trail maintenance outcomes.

Shoreline Co-benefits: A Public Access, Habitat, and Flood Control Primer

Marina Alvarez French, Principal Landscape Architect, Facet & panel

Now more than ever, when planning for recreation with flood resilient designs and habitat protection, a coordinated systems plan approach is key. To balance these elements, the City of North Bend created and adopted a Shoreline Public Access Plan. King County Flood Control District partnered with the City to align public access improvements including low-bank beach access with flood risk reduction projects like levee setbacks. The plan promotes coordinated, multi-benefit outcomes while educating the public about levee limitations and responsibilities. This session highlights how to build partnerships by planning shoreline access and inspiring shoreline stewardship.

White River Trail Bridge; Aiding our Community and Environment

Sujata Goel, Government Relations, King County & panel

The White River Trail Bridge connects King and Pierce County's portions of the Foothills Trail. This bridge was designed with significant habitat features, channel migration areas and as an emergency travel route should something ever happen to Highway 410. The bridge opened in

September 2024 and in August 2025, Highway 410 closed due to unexpected damage. For months, the White River Trail Bridge was the only way for communities and emergency vehicles to cross the river. The presentation will cover how the bridge became critical infrastructure moving people during the challenging Highway 410 closure and the strategic coordination between the counties, cities and the state to use this route in an emergency.

WDFW Statewide Road and Trail Inventory

Erin Browning, Partnership Coordinator, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW)

This presentation will cover the process that WDFW has undertaken with contractor Logan Simpson to do baseline travel management work across the state. WDFW and Logan Simpson have been inventorying routes and conducting conditions assessments to be able to designate roads, trails, and allowed uses in each wildlife area. The long-term goal is to have a sustainable travel network throughout WDFW-managed lands. Join us to learn about this effort.

Innovation in the Pedestrian Bridge World

John Mauney, Sales Engineer, Areté Structures, LLC

The history of pedestrian bridges is about much more than bridges. It is a story of human ingenuity, tracing how people have overcome obstacles, connected communities, and adapted new technologies over thousands of years. Beginning with the earliest natural crossings and continuing through suspension bridges, steel structures, and today's advanced composite designs, this presentation explores the innovations that transformed simple pathways into sophisticated engineered structures. Whether you're a bridge enthusiast, trail advocate, history buff, or simply curious about human ingenuity, you'll discover that pedestrian bridges offer a fascinating window into the broader story of technological and societal development.

Community Health and Accessibility

How do People Access and Experience Benefits from Nature?

Understanding Human Health and Wellbeing in the Puget Sound

Rebecca Hollender, Cascadia Consulting Group & panel

Over the past 20 years, the Puget Sound Partnership has developed an existing set of "Human Wellbeing Vital Signs", which measure progress towards a healthy human population and a vibrant quality of life via peoples' interactions with nature. The existing Human Wellbeing Vital Signs have informed the integration of health and wellbeing, Tribal and cultural knowledge, and environmental justice into environmental projects. Despite investments and advances towards integrating human wellbeing into ecosystem restoration in the Puget Sound, there remain crucial gaps and opportunities. These include challenges to accurately monitor and report on human wellbeing outcomes and limited involvement of overburdened and vulnerable communities in planning, monitoring, and implementation.

To address this last challenge, the Puget Sound Partnership has engaged with community-based organizations that represent communities who are disproportionately impacted by environmental injustices across the Puget Sound region – including youth, Black communities, Asian American and Pacific Island communities, and immigrant communities – using community-based participatory methods to better understand resonance of existing Human Wellbeing Vital Signs, additional community dimensions of human wellbeing, and opportunities to revise the Human Wellbeing Vital Signs to improve its resonance with overburdened and vulnerable communities. This presentation will share the results of this community-based participatory effort and its applications for natural resource management decision-making processes.

Chelan Douglas Pathways: A Practical Strategy for Connecting Communities through Regional Trails

Jill Roszel, Landscape Architect and Planner, Alta Planning + Design & panel

How do you go from an ambitious regional trail vision to real projects that are actually ready to build? The Chelan Douglas Pathways Project offers a practical approach. Anchored by the success of the Apple Capital Loop Trail, the plan connects communities, schools, parks, and transit through four corridor concepts with clear phasing and next steps. In this session, we will share the decision tools that kept the work moving, including targeted outreach, corridor advisory committees, and a transparent way to compare route options. We will also highlight how coordinated roles and partnerships advanced the work, from Chelan-Douglas Transportation Council's leadership and agency coordination with partners such as WSDOT; to Alta's engagement, design, and feasibility work; to TREAD's efforts to carry the plan toward implementation.

Mansfield Branch Line Trail: A Rural Town's Multi-Use Trail Plan

Mat Lyons, Executive Director, TREAD & panel

The Mansfield Branch Line Trail presents an invaluable opportunity to expand outdoor recreation, acquiring and preserving public access, and enhancing economic impact in North Central Washington. The Town of Mansfield, private land owners, and TREAD are working together to plan and develop a public access corridor and access points. With only 17.6% public land in Douglas County, the Town of Mansfield is working to increase public land access, recreation opportunities, and connect six rural communities.

Regional Connections: The Statewide Network in Our Future

Grace Young, GIS/Data Specialist, Active Transportation Division, Washington State Depart. Of Transportation (WSDOT)

Consider trails as multisolving tools that benefit health, access to opportunity, economic development, resilience and evacuation/disaster recovery. The Washington state Legislature has twice directed WSDOT to evaluate potential for a statewide bikeways and trails network to connect population centers, support mode shift, and improve safety performance. WSDOT staff will share information from the near-final report, invite participants to identify gaps in the map

and discuss examples of project prioritization on different criteria. Join us to learn about the state of our current network, which trails belong on the conceptual map, which designs invite all ages and abilities, how we prioritize projects for funding and how we track the progress of these projects. This presentation also considers what it will take to maintain and operate a full system and what policies present barriers to implementation.

Expanding Access: Trails Design for Low-Vision and Blind Recreationalists

Kristi M Park, PLA, Statewide Design and Planning Lead/Landscape Architect, WA Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is exploring increasing recreation accessibility throughout DNR's landscapes as guided by the 2025 Outdoor Access and Responsible Recreation Strategic Plan. Among several approaches under consideration to increase accessibility is a focus on improving trail access for blind and low-vision recreationalists. Trails that emphasize infrastructure for the low vision and blind recreation community are often known as braille trails. As of 2026, DNR is pursuing funding to develop a pilot braille trail project at the McLane Creek Nature Trail in Olympia. The project includes the pursuit of grants, community engagement and a mix of exploring physical infrastructure and technological solutions.

Boundary Reservoir - Eastside Trails

Michael Aronowitz, Sr. Resource Planner, Seattle City Light (City of Seattle)

Trails Spotlight: In 2025, Seattle City Light, the municipal electric utility of the City of Seattle and operator of the Boundary Hydroelectric Project in north Pend Oreille County, completed a suite of new recreational trails along the eastside of the Boundary reservoir/Pend Oreille River. These new facilities include a portage trail around Metaline Falls, two new overlooks providing views of the reservoir canyon previously hidden from most visitors, and the 9-mile-long Salmo Passage hiking trail. Each trail was designed to incorporate accessible features, and provides new recreational opportunities in one of the most scenic and wild corners of Washington State.

Funding Trails to Fuel the Recreation Economy

Will Generational Changes in How People Give, Volunteer, and Join Undermine Washington's Recreation Economy?

Jeffrey J. Cain, Principal, Lemolo Bay Advisors

20 million US households have stopped giving to nonprofit organizations. Volunteerism is in decline. People aren't joining organizations like they used to. And trust in institutions, including philanthropic and nonprofit organizations, is reaching new lows. A dramatic shift is underway in how Americans give, volunteer, and participate in civil society organizations, including trails and outdoor recreation and conservation organizations. What impact will generational change in giving, gathering, and volunteering habits have on the recreation economy? How should

organizations respond to these changes? How can groups build better relationships with new generations that give, join, and volunteer differently than older cohorts? The focus of this talk is on understanding generational changes in the way Americans give, volunteer, and participate in nonprofit organizations as a first-step in building organizational resiliency.

The Economics of Recreation in Washington

Leah Dobey, Policy Specialist, Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO)

Outdoor recreation is vital to Washington's way of life, fueling local businesses, supporting jobs in both urban and rural communities, and offering residents and visitors a deeper connection to nature. Join this session to explore findings from the Recreation and Conservation Office's 2025 update to the Economic Analysis of Outdoor Recreation report. Discover key data on spending, jobs, and economic benefits, while also learning about broader impacts like environmental value and community access.

Shared Paths, Shared Stats: Building Data Partnerships Across User Groups

Sarah Lange, Principal, Convergence Resource Partners

Making the case for investments in trails often rests on proving economic and social contributions, but small organizations rarely have the resources to gather this data alone. Whether you care about motorized 4x4 routes, urban multi-use paths, or backcountry single-track, we all need better data to manage our resources effectively. This workshop is a "dirty hands" session where participants will actively draft a collaborative data strategy. We will explore how joint fact-finding and shared stewardship can transform the task of data collection from a burden into a community asset. By the end of the session, you will have a custom strategy identifying what to measure, which partners to involve, and how to aggregate results. This process is applicable across all trail types and focuses on building the partnerships necessary to ensure Washington's trails remain resilient and their benefits well-documented for the future.

The WA Wildlife and Recreation Program: Statewide Impact & How We Develop our Funding Ask

Nathaniel Rees, Policy and Communications Manager, WA Wildlife and Recreation Coalition

The Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program is our state's largest public funding source for outdoor community projects. Since 1991, the program's invested more than \$2.2 billion across Washington, including funding for 194 trail projects. Behind that impact is a small but mighty team — just four staff supported by a deeply engaged Board of Directors — working year-round to advocate for the program's success. In this presentation, we take a closer look at the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition, the WWRP's impact on trails across the state, and the strategy behind securing continued investment in the places people love.

New Maintenance Funding for Green Dot Roads

Brody Coval, Recreation Policy Manager, WA Department of Natural Resources (DNR) & panel
During the 2025 legislative session, DNR and WDFW secured one-time access to motorized trail maintenance funding that was at risk of being swept. The Multi-Use Roadway Safety Account (MURSA) is a grant fund managed by WSDOT and funded by WA ATV tab registrations that was historically available to counties and municipalities for safety and maintenance of WATV routes. Facing budget issues, the Legislature likely would have swept the ballooning account for other purposes. Learn about how DNR and WDFW worked with motorized recreationists and affected counties to access those funds and address a maintenance backlog on Green Dot Roads for the 25-27 biennium. Green Dot Roads are primarily managed for motorized recreation in southeast Washington, meaning the funds were kept within their intended use and benefited users who contribute via registrations.

Upper Valley Sustainable Trails Project Landscape-Scale Recreation Planning Through Coordinated Third-Party NEPA

Mat Lyons, Executive Director, TREAD & panel

The Upper Valley Sustainable Trails Project represents one of the most comprehensive recreation planning efforts undertaken in the region, utilizing a coordinated third-party NEPA process to evaluate more than 60 recreation and trail-related projects across over 120,000 acres of public lands.

Designed to address growing recreation demand while improving environmental stewardship and operational efficiency, the project brings together federal agencies, local governments, nonprofit partners, and community stakeholders under a unified planning framework. By analyzing multiple interconnected projects simultaneously, the initiative seeks to streamline environmental review, reduce long-term management costs, improve trail sustainability, and create a strategic regional recreation system that balances access, conservation, and community benefit.

Culture and Community Engagement

Walking Ebey's – Conservation and Recreation

Jessica Larson, Stewardship Director, Whidbey Camano Land Trust

Conservation easements remove development and protect important conservation values while keeping lands in private hands to be stewarded. Trails are often an afterthought with these documents, especially in large landscapes. The Whidbey Camano Land Trust has spent the last two decades planning for and creating trails across private conservation easements and connecting into state, federal and local government lands within Ebey's Landing National Historic Reserve. This created new access to this iconic landscape and involved a coordinated effort among many partners, over 22 landowners and a soon to be 8-mile trail system through

working agricultural lands. See how conservation work can include a recreational benefit and what lessons were learned in how to develop and maintain trails with so many stakeholders.

Storytelling as a Community: Process, Collaboration, and Lessons Learned

Jinger Hendricks, Visual Communications Lead, Parametrix & panel

The Foothills Rails-to-Trails Coalition and Parametrix present project highlights from a deeply collaborative community engagement process, rooted in listening, research, and partnership. We'll share how the story came together: gathering input from passionate trail advocates and family members of the Foothills Trail's founders; sifting through decades of photographs and personal stories; and working closely with Pierce County, the City of Buckley, the local historical museum, civic leaders, and Tribal partners to ensure important histories are respectfully represented. The resulting interpretive panels reflect an authentic, community-driven voice. Along the way, we encountered challenges, learned valuable lessons, and made a few missteps – each strengthening the final outcome. Most of all, we'll share what made this journey so rewarding: creating a place-based story that honors the past while connecting people in the present.

When We Care for Our Community and Planet, We Care for Ourselves

Lisa Watt Banks, Founder, The Aloha Tree Project

The Aloha Tree Project is a volunteer movement seeking to inspire others. Our audience is individuals who work with outdoor volunteers, youth, and families, as well as anyone interested in learning about Nature Informed Wellness. I will share a little about my journey and why I shifted from my thirty-year career in social services to Nature Informed Wellness after my son Lucas passed in 2023. Two years after my son passed, I attended a three-day Nature Informed Therapy course and went on to complete the follow up three-month certification course.

My work with youth explores the reciprocal relationship of how volunteer work and time in nature can benefit their mental health and well-being and in return benefit the well-being of their community. In a time when many people are struggling and feel disconnected, I believe that volunteer work and time in nature can help nurture our souls and remind us that we are not separate from the natural world, but an integral part of it. Living with this awareness invites us to act with respect, responsibility, and gratitude toward all living things and the ecosystems that sustain us.

Putting the Community in Community Forest: How Recreation Partners and Agencies Have Collaborated to Develop Trails in the Teanaway Community Forest

Jesse Cunningham, Advocacy and Trails Program Manager, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance & panel

Learn how collaborative recreation planning is being used to develop a non-motorized trail system in the Teanaway Community Forest. Speakers will talk about the community forest model and how partners and agencies engage to balance multiple management priorities while

developing and implementing a comprehensive trail plan. The presentation will cover a range of topics including the planning process, decision making, funding, implementation, partner collaboration, and community engagement. The panel will also discuss challenges, successes, and the importance of shared stewardship.

Engaging the Next Generation of Environmental Stewards

Lev Kellendy, Washington State Director, Northwest Youth Corps

A discussion on the ways conservation and service corps provide opportunities for young people to develop workforce readiness skills and have a positive impact on recreation and climate related challenges while also building the next generation of environmental stewards.

Belonging in the Outdoors

Lisa Foster, Associate Director, TREAD & panel

'Belonging in the Outdoors' is a unique partnership of several North Central Washington (NCW) nonprofit organizations. In 2023, the NCW Equity Alliance and TREAD held a film-and-workshop series to gather input from community members about how to make the outdoors more accessible and welcoming to all. More than 150 community members attended the series, dedicating time and energy to listen, learn, and offer ideas that ultimately became the actionable steps featured in an action packed report. In 2026, we are working on the action plan. We are starting 2026 with a film "Best Day Ever" bringing our community together to increase adaptive mountain biking access. At the film screening, local nonprofits will showcase how they are working to increase belonging not just within the biking community, but throughout NCW.

Volunteer Trail Construction

Peggy Price, Trail Work Coordinator, Newcastle Trails

Volunteers are a mixed bunch of people with different levels of skills and interests. Working with volunteers can support projects that provide significant opportunities to build trails skirting wildlife corridors, that improve neighborhood trail access, and as opportunities for the public to try out trail work and get a taste for what's involved.

Field Sessions

Washington's First Certified Forest Therapy Trail

Michael Stein-Ross, Founder, Cascadia Forest Therapy with OneRedmond

Forest Therapy (aka Forest Bathing or Shinrin Yoku) is part of the region's growing culture of nature connection practices. In 2026, Cascadia Forest Therapy and OneRedmond partnered to create Washington State's first certified Forest Therapy trail. Discussion will include the inspiration behind the project, the certification process, the development of a local wellness-focused tourism economy, data from the first few months of the project, and a vision

for the development of a regional network. Join us to experience first-hand the values of Forest Bathing.

Hiking Through Time: The Living History of Martin Ranch

Michael 'Mic' McLane, Trails Program Manager - Eastern Washington, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance

This on-trail session follows the hiker-only Martin Ranch Trail from the trailhead to the meadow overlook, tracing the canyon's evolution through the stories still etched into the landscape. Led by Al Murphy, the hike circles the footprint of the original ski hill, where rusted counterweights, old pulleys, and rope-tow cuts still mark the terrain. Along the way, we'll explore how farming, ranching, horse racing, and skiing gave way to today's 35-mile recreation network, and how this quiet foot-traffic-only route offers an intimate window into the past and future of Number 2 Canyon.