

Vernonia Wheels Park Gets Rolling



Above: Tom Ramsey builds a skateboard ramp to be installed in the Vernonia Wheels Park. Right: George Tice of the Vernonia Lions Club shows off the site of the temporary Wheels Park.

After years of planning and numerous stops and starts, the Vernonia Wheels Park is finally making some positive progress.

A mixed-use park for skateboards and bicycles, the Wheels Park will be located on the unused tennis courts at the Vernonia High School. The Vernonia Lions Club, working in conjunction with the Vernonia Prevention Coalition, have secured permission to use the site as a temporary location. The Lions Club began construction of wooden ramps and metal grinding bars on Saturday, May 29th, and will continue to coordinate construction of additional features for the park. Tom Ramsey, Jim Prpich and George Tice were working on construction of the wooden ramps; Richard Meyer and Nathan Owen fabricated the metal grind bars from material donated by Dan Titus.

“The Lions Club has funds that we’ve raised and will purchase

supplies for construction,” said Tice, spokesperson for the Lions. “We are looking for community members, especially youth, to help build and set up ramps.”

Work parties are also needed to complete installation of a short section of fence around the park, paint signs and do some general clean-up at the site.

The site will be temporary, as FEMA is in the process of buying the school site, at which time all permanent structures will be required to be removed. That process is not expected to be completed for at least two years.

Tice says the Lions Club intended to have several

ramps and features built and installed in time for a grand opening on July 4th. According to Tice, additional construction and features will be completed and added to the Wheels Park throughout the summer.

In the meantime, a long-time dream for the Vernonia community, and especially for the youth, is finally looking like it will become a reality.

For more information or to volunteer contact Larry Snethen at (503) 819-5636 or any Vernonia Lions member.



Mountain Bike Trail Ready to Open at Stub Stewart

A long-time dream of the Portland area mountain biking community is about to become a reality-- a legal place to ride and build trails on public property.



This Roll-over ramp will be the entrance to the mountain bike trail area at Stub Stewart State Park.

On May 30th, members of the Northwest Trail Alliance and volunteers had a chance to officially ride on the trail they have been constructing at Stub Stewart State Park. The previous day, the group had spent working on the newly constructed trail. The ride was the soft opening of the new “bike only” trail-- the official opening was scheduled for June 5th, which coincides with National Trails Day as well as Oregon State Parks Day.

The new trail is located in the northeast section of the park. Currently, North Caddywhomper Way is a moderate trail designated for bikes only in that area of the park. The new, as yet unnamed mountain bike trail, will be an intermediate level single track trail that will snake back and forth across the Caddywhomper trail.

The trail starts with a split rail fence with a roll-over ramp that riders

have to ride to enter the trail. “The fence at the trailhead is kind of a first filter to help keep other users out,” says Stub Stewart Park Ranger, Steve Kruger, who is in charge of trails.

The single track trail is the culmination of years of work by mountain bike enthusiasts and advocates who have lobbied for a permanent and sanctioned place to ride mountain bikes in close proximity to Portland. The project at Stub Stewart Park is a collaboration between Northwest Trail Alliance-- a chapter of the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA), and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. An agreement has been drafted between the two that has allowed volunteers to design and plan the trail system, construct the trails and maintain them.

“That was the plan all along with the Parks Department-- to depend on local mountain bike volunteer organizations to provide the labor to design, build and maintain the trails going forward,” said Joe Rykowski, a volunteer Trail Steward with Northwest Trail Alliance. Rykowski has been instrumental in designing the trail system in conjunction with Stub Stewart Park staff and has led the volunteer build days portion of the project. “We now have an “Adopt-A-Park” agreement in place between Northwest Trails Alliance and Oregon Parks and Rec, which is a one-year agreement which we will renew for maintenance purposes to keep the trails in working order. We will also do monthly

inspections of the trails to make sure everything is in good shape,” explained Rykowski.

“We’re wrapping up the volunteer work-- that is, working on the trail tread and getting the trail as close to ready as we can,” said Rykowski. “There are still some responsibilities that the park needs to finish out, including the sign plan.”

Shawn Holt, who was working on the trail on Saturday, May 29th, is an employee of Fat Tire Farm, a bike shop in Portland. Holt gets paid to build mountain bike trails. “Park [Chambers], the owner of Fat Tire Farm, decided that he wanted to give back to the mountain biking community and so he has me out here helping build trails and he pays me to do this,” says Holt.

“Having Shawn here has been a huge help in keeping things moving forward,” said Rykowski.

The section of trail that is being opened is what Rykowski is calling Phase One of the project, and is about one mile in length, which is about one-third of the total planned “mountain bike zone.” “We have trail flagged out in the south part of the park and we’re building from the south up in this direction,” says Rykowski. “The idea is that in a couple of years, we’ll have that trail ready to connect up and we’ll put in a bridge



Trail building crews have been hard at work getting new mountain bike trails ready to ride this summer.

that links across one of the big drainages and this will all be one big mountain biking area with about 4-5 miles of trails.”

Rykowski also mentioned plans for another local mountain bike group, Westside Trail Federation, to build a Skills Area. “That will be a little more of an advanced mountain bike single track, with more advanced trail to experience. We don’t have a timeline yet; it depends on the response to this mountain bike area and that [the Skills Area] would be an enhancement of the area.”

Rykowski also mentioned that Northwest Trails Alliance has applied for and received a Recreation Trails Program Grant to purchase an ST240, a machine designed specifically for building single track trail. “The idea is that Northwest Trail Alliance would manage this piece of equipment for other agencies and organizations that are doing projects to build mountain bike trail and other shared use trails. That’s really what our mission is-- to help support building single track opportunities.”

Rykowski explained that the equipment would be available for lease by groups looking to build trails and that the program is intended to include grant opportunities for groups who need assistance to fund their trail building work.

