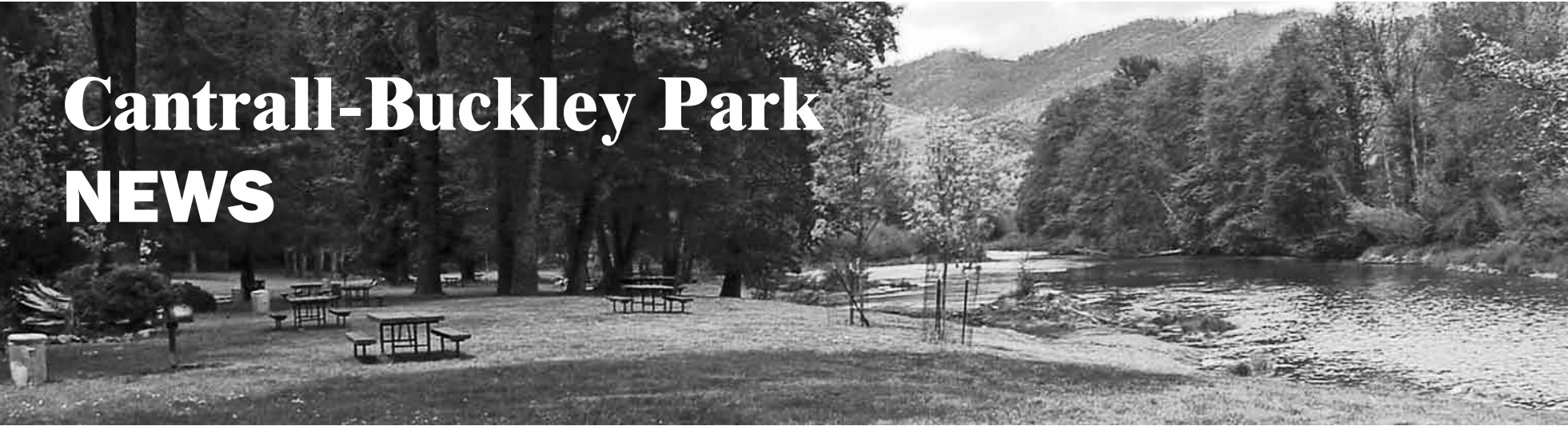




The Cantrall-Buckley Park Committee continues to work on the playground improvement plan and has made tentative choices for new equipment. The playground is not currently American Disabilities Act (ADA) approved, and we are trying to include an area for ADA accessibility in the plan. This area could be used by all children, including those with physical limitations. There are many aspects to our improvement plan beyond selection and purchase of the playground equipment. We need to remove some existing structures and older equipment. A barrier will need to be constructed around most of the play area to contain new soft-fall material in the playground.

We have also discussed placing some form of barrier or screen below the road on the uphill side of the play area to discourage children from getting too close to the road and to give drivers a visual barrier. Items that are deemed unsafe by today's playground standards need to be repaired or removed. We plan to add new picnic tables and replace two benches currently in need of repair. Getting everything to fit in the existing footprint of the play area will require good planning and a little magic.

Serious outdoor cleanup was needed by many of us after the series of storms that blew through the valley this winter. The park is no exception, and there is a lot of tree debris on the road and ground. There

was tree damage, and some trees have fallen into the river. With only the park manager on duty, it is impossible for the park to get cleaned up.

A community cleanup day at the park is scheduled for Saturday, March 23, from 9 am to 12 noon. Volunteers are asked to bring their own equipment—gloves, brooms, blowers, rakes, shovels, rakes, pruners—with the plan of getting the road, parking areas and picnic areas cleaned up. This is an event for all ages; if students need credit for community service in school, this will qualify. Community involvement in an event like this can help us get grant money to fund improvements like the playground, as donation of community time on a

project can contribute to a higher ranking on grant applications. Refreshments will be served, or bring your lunch and have a nice picnic after the cleanup. This will be a fun and rewarding time, and an excellent contribution to your community. We hope to see you at the cleanup on March 23.

The park committee is looking forward to **Applegate Valley Days, Saturday, June 22**. This year's event, to be held one day only, will have **free parking and no admission charge**. Watch for details on www.applegatevalleydays.org and mark your calendars now for June 22. Come out to enjoy a day by the river.

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Applegate trails: Strengthening our bonds with wild plants

BY MICHELLE LAFAVE

Snow drips from the trees and the frosted ground crunches beneath my boots. I love winter hiking because I don't get overheated. The air is crisp and fresh. I rejoice in hearing the music of the forest.

But alas, the harmony of the winter forest is disturbed by coughs and sneezes. Fear not, noble hiker, your deep breaths will return in no time if you embrace the natural healing wonders of the living plant world. Call their names with reverence as you encounter them on the trail: usnea, Oregon grape, elderberry, nettles, coltsfoot, not to mention yerba santa and beloved osha.

You may have a bottle of elderberry cough syrup on your shelf at home. Mothers may have tasted dried nettles in their pregnancy teas. However, nothing compares to the nourishment of fresh nettles stewed lightly as a spring tonic—

they are high in iron, calcium, and vitamins C, D, and K. Meeting and familiarizing yourself with your plant allies in person is a key part of long-term wellness, not only for individuals, but also for assuring the survival of natural, wild medicines. Strengthening our bonds with wild plants is a way of solidifying our commitment to future health, for what we know and love, we protect.

Stinging nettle (*Urtica spp.*) is typically found near water and boggy areas. Nettles grow in large stands, composed of single stalk, stinger-bearing specimens bearing dark green leaves. Handle raw nettles with gloves! Nettles concentrate minerals, especially in the roots, and so should never be harvested near old mines, agricultural sites, or roadways. Their high mineral concentration makes them an excellent nutritional for recuperation

after illness. You can enjoy the fresh leaves consumed as cooked greens in soup and in dried form as tea or ground into powder to be added to foods. As an astringent, nettle tea helps with internal bleeding and clears congestion. (Moore, 2003) As a diuretic, nettle tea or juice cleanses the blood, thus providing an aid in arthritis and skin conditions as it rids the body of toxins. (Moore, 1993) Throughout the northern hemisphere, nettles have long been regarded as a cleansing spring tonic.

Remember the ethics of wildcrafting. Do no harm. Take only what you need and leave plenty for the animals. Offer the earth something in return such as a prayer or small natural gift. Protect the gift of natural medicine by working to keep our forests healthy and whole.

If you are interested in promoting nonmotorized trails, participating in forest education projects, or learning more about native forests, please join the Applegate Trails Association. We have a number of great ongoing projects:

- Develop trailheads at six key access

points along the Applegate Ridge Trail (pending Title II funding)

- Continue to refine the on-the-ground location of the Applegate Ridge Trail
- Offer Applegate Trails Association group hikes for 2013
- Collaborate on trail maintenance at Cantrall-Buckley Park
- Coordinate with the Bureau of Land Management to identify existing and potential nonmotorized trails for protection
- Host fund-raising dinner/campout at Jackson Campground in September 2013

Look for our schedule of upcoming hikes on www.applegatetrails.org.

Michelle LaFave

Board Member

Applegate Trails Association
michelle@applegatetrails.org

References:

Moore, Michael. Medicinal Plants of the Mountain West. Santa Fe, NM: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2003.

Moore, Michael. Medicinal Plants of the Pacific West. Santa Fe, NM: Red Crane Books, 1993.

Where is the trail?

Do you know of a trail on public lands and are you willing to share that knowledge? For those who live near Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land, this hiking trail may be an easy walk right over your property boundary. There are other trails that have grown over in places enough to make them difficult to find. BLM is in the process of creating a new Resource Management Plan (RMP), which will be their guide for the next ten years or more. Although you may be hesitant to tell BLM about your "secret" trail, allowing the agency to document these user-created and sometimes historic trails improves the odds that that trail may be designated for nonmotorized use. The alternative may see muscle-powered use trumped by off-highway vehicle (OHV) use. Generally, trails used regularly by motorcycles are not desirable for hikers and horses, and proper planning can help avoid conflict between muscle-powered and fossil fuel users.

Please contact David Calahan at 541-899-1226 or david@applegatetrails.org or any of the board members of the Applegate Trails Association (ATA) to help relay your knowledge to BLM. Or you may contact Dennis Byrd at Medford BLM at dbyrd@blm.gov with your information.

ATA is a nonprofit local organization formed to develop a system of hiking, biking and equestrian trails in the Applegate Valley. Check out our website at www.applegatetrails.org and consider that our existence is helped immensely by your donations. Thank you.

Applegate Trails Association guided spring hikes

The Applegate Trails Association (ATA) will host a beautiful off-trail hike in April and an easier flower-filled hike in May, both on the Applegate Ridge Trail (ART). ATA is looking forward to seeing familiar faces and making new acquaintances as we celebrate our third hiking season together.

Saturday, April 20. For our first outing we will explore the east ART, which is located on the ridge north of Bishop Creek between Sterling Creek and Highway 238. We meet at 9 am at the Bunny Meadows Staging Area (off Highway 238 at the intersection of Forest Creek Road and Longanecker Road). From there we will carpool to the trailhead. This off-trail hike is approximately five miles long and is rated moderate to difficult. The elevation gain and loss is over 1,000 feet.

Saturday, May 18. We will visit the flower-covered mountain meadows above Balls Branch, a tributary to Humbug Creek and the Applegate River. We again meet at 9 am at the Bunny Meadows Staging Area,

and from there we carpool to the trailhead, a 20-minute drive up Forest Creek. The out and back hike is rated moderate (about two-and-a-half miles). A second hike leader will offer an alternate thru-hike down into the proposed 6,000-acre Wellington wildlands. This longer trek (approximately four miles) is rated moderate to difficult due to the elevation changes and condition of the trail.

An RSVP is always appreciated. Please contact hike leader David Calahan at 541-899-1226 or david@applegatetrails.org for details and sign-in. Remember to wear sturdy footwear, appropriate clothing for the weather, and perhaps bring a hiking stick for the uneven terrain. Please leave your pets at home.

Check out our website at www.applegatetrails.org for individual hikes, and stay tuned as ATA will be featuring more hikes in 2013.

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