



Father's Day barbecue at Cantrall-Buckley Park

BY DAVID LAANANEN

Don't forget the Father's Day barbecue that will be held on Sunday, June 15, from 11 am to 4 pm, sponsored by the Greater Applegate Community Development Corporation (GACDC) and the Applegate Valley Lions Club.

The Lions Club will barbecue tri-tip, chicken, and hot dogs. The Ruch Country Store will roast corn, and the McKee

Bridge Historical Society will offer root beer floats and baked goods. Wine, beer, and other beverages will be available.

The usual \$4 per car fee for entry to the park will be charged. Come out to celebrate Dad and family.

David Laananen

541-846-0500

david.laananen@asu.edu

Applegate Trails Association inaugurates a new Applegate trail

BY DIANA COOGLE

Blow trumpets and wave flags! The Applegate Trails Association (ATA) is having a trail dedication ceremony on June 7 to celebrate the installation of a new kiosk and picnic table at the Long Gulch Trailhead.

This official opening of the Heart Trail, in the heart of the Wellington Wildlands, begins at 10 am and will feature free food, music, bubble-blowing and face-painting for the kids, and a ceremonious cutting of the brilliant red ribbon at the trailhead. Jeff Leland, U.S. Forest Service archeologist, will fill us in on interesting history of the area, and ATA chair David Calahan will talk briefly about the organization's dream of building the Applegate Ridge Trail (ART) from Grants Pass to Jacksonville.

The ART would connect with the Jack-Ash Trail that the Siskiyou Uplands Trail Association is building from Jacksonville to Ashland. Eventually, then, we will be able to walk from Grants Pass to Ashland, spending the night at the Jacksonville Inn along the way and taking in dinner, a play, and a night in a B&B in

Ashland at the end—and, maybe also, a long soak in a spa.

If you're wondering why anyone would want to walk from Grants Pass to Ashland, come to the trailhead dedication on June 7 and hike the Heart Trail. The Wellington Wildlands is a gorgeous piece of the Applegate, hidden behind mountains and as wild as any place in the area, offering spectacular views of Siskiyou mountains, wildflowers in profusion, and gentle ridge-top trails (and some doozies, but the Heart Trail isn't one).

To get to Long Gulch Trailhead, go through Ruch towards Jacksonville. Turn left on Forest Creek Road and follow the signs. To carpool, meet at 9:30 am at the Bunny Meadows Staging Area (0.7 mile up Forest Creek).

ATA offers hikes all summer. You can find the schedule at www.applegatetrails.org. And if you're wildly enthusiastic about wildlands and hiking, come to the ATA fund-raiser at Red Lily Vineyards in September or join us on the board.

Diana Coogle

dcoogle@laughdogpress.com

The challenges and benefits of local trails

BY HOPE ROBERTSON

The Applegate Valley has fantastic trails, including Jacksonville's wonderful trail system managed by the Jacksonville Woodlands Association and a wide array of trails scattered across rural areas and wildlands around our valley. In addition, proposed ridge-top and nonmotorized trail systems include the Jack-Ash Trail that would connect the Jacksonville trails to the Ashland trail system, and the Applegate Ridge Trail that would run from Jacksonville to Grants Pass.

Trails bring together people of all ages and political and religious persuasions to enjoy the simple pleasure of being outdoors, whether it's a short-distance stroll or a long-distance run. A recent recreation survey showed that 47 percent of Jackson County residents take advantage of local trails, enjoying the amazing and diverse ecosystems in our valley.

But these simple pleasures also provide concrete value to our regional economy. Many studies document the economic benefits of local trails; these benefits include higher property values and an increase in recreation dollars spent at local businesses that sell equipment, food and clothing. Trails through our gorgeous wildlands add to other wonderful regional amenities such as theatre, wineries and music, bringing more tourist dollars into the economy.

Despite the well-documented value of recreational opportunities, we should not assume that existing trails (or other recreational amenities) on public lands will remain open for use, or that new trail systems will be added. As with so many other services provided by government, funding cuts threaten the continuation of recreation services on public lands.

We are seeing trails and campgrounds in our region being abandoned due to lack of funding for maintenance. Unfortunately, it may become necessary to choose which trails to save, but there is hope!

For example, four years ago large sections of the historic Sterling Mine Ditch Trail in the Applegate were impassable. Hikers and equestrians gave up using most of it because it was almost impossible to hack through the undergrowth or crawl over fallen trees. Because the trail was no longer being used, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) questioned spending scarce recreation dollars on its maintenance. The Rogue Valley and Applegate communities rallied around efforts of the Siskiyou Upland Trails Association (SUTA) and volunteers to re-open the Sterling Mine Ditch Trail. This organized community effort resulted in tremendous cooperation and funding assistance from the Medford BLM. The community now has seven trailheads accessing 30 miles of trail within the Sterling Mine Ditch system, which has become a wildly popular recreation resource. The trail should remain a community recreation resource for years to come, and

we hope it will be named an Oregon State Scenic Trail. But reviving and maintaining this resource took time and lots of effort.

Another example of how funding cuts are impacting local recreational resources is the removal of old, unsafe bridges on some US Forest Service (USFS) trails and roads such as the Middle Fork Trail of the Applegate River. There were no plans or money to replace the Middle Fork bridges. But thanks to an organized request from the community, money to replace several USFS bridges was recently allocated for fiscal year 2015-2016. We look forward to better access to that gorgeous trail.

What does the fate of these two trails portend for the future of our recreational resources? First of all, an organized community can have a big impact on behalf of a recreational trail resource. The Sterling Mine Ditch Trail became overgrown and impassable and the gorgeous Middle Fork trail languished without its bridges until organized community efforts triggered BLM and USFS to allocate scarce resources to those trails. Again, community time and effort produced results.

Second, considering that trails represent a significant revenue source for our economy, each of us should remind our elected officials of the economic value of recreation, lest the recreation budgets for the county, state and federal agencies disappear.

Third, the community can no longer sit back and assume that the government will maintain beautifully trimmed trails for our enjoyment. Those days are gone. If we want great trails, we all need to chip in, either by making financial donations to the various trail groups in our region or by showing up to help work on the trails.

Our experience is that if we step up to the plate and demonstrate willingness to work on the trails, the relevant government agency will respond in kind—especially if there is political support for doing so. As a bonus, we have found that working on trails is a fabulous way to build a community of like-minded friends while enhancing the amenities of our region.

Hope Robertson

Siskiyou Upland Trails Association

sutaoregoncontact@gmail.com

Visit the New Tasting Room!
Fridays - Sundays
12 - 5 pm

4550 Little Applegate Rd
enjoywildwines.com
541-899-1565

Wild Wines
Organic Fruit, Flower and Berry Wines

Applegate River Ranch Lodge & Restaurant

Restaurant open 5 - 9 pm
Wednesday - Sunday
Lodge open 7 days a week
Wednesday Night Live Music

Lodge 541-846-6690
Restaurant 541-846-6082
Wedding/Special Events 541-660-0244
www.applegaterranchlodge.com



Community volunteers maintaining the Sterling Mine Ditch trail—the necessity of the future.

Please support our advertisers! Shop local; keep our dollars local.