

Roving Reporter

Applegate Trails Association comes to a fork in the road

BY TOM CARSTENS

It was the end of May 2011. The Applegate Neighborhood Network was promoting the establishment of a new national monument in the Applegate Valley, and the meeting had attracted a politically diverse group of Applegaters. One of these was David Calahan, a retired Medford firefighter. But David wasn't there to get into a heated discussion about the proposal for a new monument. He was there to market an idea he had for a new system of trails in the Applegate.

David's kitchen, and the Applegate Trails Association (ATA) was born. They decided to call David's vision the Applegate Ridge Trail (ART). While ATA has sponsored dozens of hikes and has underwritten a wide variety of trails projects in the valley (including those in Cantrall Buckley Park), the ART remains the inspiration for the organization. The East ART was completed in May 2017. It traces a lazy path high above Bishop Creek and affords panoramic



David had been doing a series of map studies, and it looked to him like there might be an opportunity to carve some nonmotorized trails on the ridges overlooking our valley. He presented a map that traced a bright red line almost entirely on public lands. Beginning in Jacksonville, it cut right along the ridge separating the Rogue and Applegate valleys all the way to Cathedral Hills in Grants Pass. Taking full advantage of existing trails, it was clean and elegant. It stirred excitement among the attendees.

David wanted to prove the concept, so a week later he led a hike along an old trail high above Forest Creek looking into the heart of the Applegate. The views were stunning; no one in the group had ever seen anything like it. Within two weeks a makeshift board of directors met in

views of the Applegate Valley surrounding Ruch. The 5.5-mile trail has proven popular with hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians. Two clearly marked trailheads with parking are at the four-mile marker on Sterling Creek Road and across from Forest Creek Road on Highway 238. Preparations for the rest of the ART are in full swing (see the accompanying map):

- The full scope of the Applegate Ridge Trail and the Jack-Ash Trail, which would go from Jacksonville to Ashland, was validated in 2016 when Luke Ruediger and Josh Weber blazed a trail from Ashland all the way to Grants Pass. (You can view the film, *Walking the Wild Applegate*, on the ATA website at applegatetrails.org.)
- The next phase, the Center ART and North ART, will connect the East

ATA 2020 Trail Maintenance Work Parties

Help maintain the stunning East Applegate Ridge Trail (East ART). You will meet new friends, develop camaraderie, get some exercise, help your community, and discover this incredibly beautiful trail. We meet at 9 am and quit in time to eat lunch at the trailhead at 12:30 pm. The East ART trailhead is at the end of BLM road 38-2-29.1.

ATA provides tools, snacks, and lunch. There are a variety of tasks for all skill levels. An RSVP is always appreciated (josh@applegatetrails.org), but not required.

Dates

- Saturday, March 7, 2020 (meet at trailhead, East ART)
- Saturday, April 4, 2020 (meet at trailhead, East ART)

Directions

From Jacksonville, turn left on Cady Road, right on Sterling Creek Road, right again 150 yards past the four-mile marker, and proceed to the trailhead. We will have directional signs out.

ATA is holding a similar trail maintenance party for Cantrall Buckley trails on Saturday, June 6, 2020. Meet at Cantrall Buckley Park.

Sponsored by the Applegate Trails Association (applegatetrails.org), a registered 501(c)(3) organization.

ART and Bunny Meadows to Jacksonville Forest Park and head west to emerge at a planned trailhead on Humbug Creek.

- Much of the Center ART has been plotted by master trail architect Duane Mallams. It includes two exciting new trails in the design phase—one climbs to the top of Wellington Butte, and one loops around it. Four trailheads have already been built along the Center ART route.
- The final phase will be the West ART, which traces the ridge overlooking the Rogue River on one side and the Applegate River on the other. It will terminate at the Cathedral Hills trail system.

Although David's dream is well along, the ATA finds itself at a crossroads. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) remains supportive, but the process to gain trail approval can be cumbersome and often requires some nudging. Grants continue to flow, but the hunt for funding is persistent. And outreach must continue, because nothing can get done without wide community support.

Keeping ART spirit alive

It's been nine years since that original board meeting in David's kitchen. The ATA has seen members come and go; now the ATA is once again seeking the right mix of directors to maintain the momentum of the ART project. ATA is inviting members of the Applegate community to participate in this fun, challenging, and rewarding effort. If you love recreating outdoors and enjoy working with those of like mind, David would like to hear from you. You can reach him at david@applegatetrails.org. He guarantees your efforts on behalf of our community will provide a unique sense of fulfillment.

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David Calahan on the east Applegate Ridge Trail.



Hikers on the east Applegate Ridge Trail. Photo: Applegate Trails Association.

Applegate dogs flood Jackson County Animal Shelter cages

BY LAURA AHEARN

During 2019, an extremely high number of dogs from the eastern Applegate area ended up in the Jackson County Animal Shelter. This area represents around one percent of the county's 220,000 human population, yet for many months *over one-third* of the unclaimed and abandoned dogs in the shelter were Applegate dogs. There were multiple serious confiscation cases, many owner surrenders, and the inevitable strays that owners never claimed.

As of the deadline for this edition, 18 of the 50 confiscated or abandoned dogs in the shelter came from Applegate Valley. That is 36 percent. No, these are not dogs that "outsiders" dumped here. (These numbers are the author's first-hand head



Puppy fostered in the Applegate. Photo: Laura Ahearn.

count and do not include dogs "on hold" to see if owners may claim them.)

The shelter still managed to improve its save rates in 2019.

Jackson County is an open admissions shelter, i.e., it accepts any dog within the county no matter how sick or dangerous.

To be recognized as "no-kill," we have to have a save rate of 90 percent or better.

There is a sad side to the massive improvement in the feline save rate. In part, this was achieved by limiting the intake of feral cats. But the new Working Cats Program was successful in finding homes for many adoptable felines in barns, vineyards, and stables.

Applegaters can help care for the animals from our community that have ended up in the shelter and keep others from this fate. Let's

make ours a no-kill community. Sign up to give a job and a home to a Working Cat. Volunteer or make a donation to Friends of the Animal Shelter (fotas.org). Foster. Adopt. Save lives.

Laura Ahearn
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Statistic	2019	2018
Canine intakes	1964	1882
- Dogs returned to owner	961	861
- Dogs adopted	813	756
- Save rate	0.9530	0.941
Feline intakes	1482	1652
- Cats returned to owner	68	55
- Cats adopted	976	776
- Save rate	0.8374	0.5752
Total save rate	0.9042	0.77

Source: Jackson County Animal Services.