



BREWERS FROM
VIKING BRAGGOT
AND CLAIM 52
SAMPLE CATTAILS



PARTICIPANTS ARE
REWARDED WITH BEER
TASTINGS AT THE END
OF THE WALK

PHOTOS BY TRASK BEDORTHA

WALKING FOR BEER

Beers Made by Walking joins nature with brewing BY AMY SCHNEIDER

Take a stroll, brew a beer: That's the concept behind Beers Made by Walking, a program that uses the beauty of nature to inspire new brews in states around the country.

McKenzie River Trust (MRT) teamed with Beers Made by Walking for the first time to put on three free, guided nature walks in and around Eugene this summer, each open to the public and featuring local breweries that will use plants observed along the walk to craft new beers.

The next Beers Made by Walking stroll takes place on July 30.

Brewers, nature lovers and botany experts alike explored the Berggren Watershed Conservation Area on June 4 in the first of the walks, checking out nettles, elderberry, hazelnuts and more. MRT acquired the 92-acre site along the Lower McKenzie River in 2010.

"We primarily like to focus on native plants, but we also look at nonnative plants brought here for their botanical uses," says Jules Abbott, membership and

outreach coordinator for MRT. "Oftentimes you can help an area if you're taking out things that could potentially be invasive."

Abbott, who helped lead the walk, says that each of the three sites exhibits unique botanical and topographical features. "Each site has its own personality, just like brewers have their own personalities, so each brew that's inspired by the landscape will have its own special flavor," she says.

The connection between wild flora and beer is a long-standing one, Abbott says, adding that the hikes are a great way to experience natural areas in the context of craft brewing. "Brews themselves are a living beverage," she says.

On the June 4 walk, hikers observed native blackberry and Oregon grape, both potential ingredients for brewers from Claim 52 Brewing, Elk Horn, Falling Sky and Viking Braggot, all of whom attended the walk. Abbott named clover, lemon balm, milk thistle and cattail as nonnative plants that could make tasty beers.

Joe Buppert, a brewer with Claim 52 Brewing, says that he's participated in Beers Made by Walking in Portland, but this is the first time he's had the opportunity to take part in a Eugene walk. "We always think there's a lot more meaning behind beer than just how it's produced," he says. "There's a story behind all the ingredients."

Although his nature-inspired brew is top secret until November, Buppert says it will "definitely involve some of the native flora, maybe something herbaceous or fruity."

The June 27 walk has passed, but on July 30, MRT will team with WildCraft Cider Works, Old Growth Ales and Plank Town Brewing for a hike at Hagens' Confluence Farms on Ferguson Creek.

Brewer John Crane from Plank Town Brewing says that he's ready for the hike. "For one thing, it's a day out in nature — I'm always up for that," he says. "The idea of foraging for your food is really cool."

Crane says Plank Town used wild hops in a beer the brewery crafted last year, adding that Plank Town tries to use local ingredients whenever possible.

On Nov. 5, brewers will unveil their nature-inspired beers at The Bier Stein, with a portion of the proceeds going toward MRT.

The next Beers Made by Walking event runs 6 to 8 pm Thursday, July 30, at Hagens' Confluence Farms in Junction City. Free, but space is limited; pre-register at mckenzie river.org.

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