

# Local & State

## TRAILS

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Johnson hopes this partnership between The Trailhead, which is a bike and ski shop in Baker City, and the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest will help future hikers avoid the conundrum that he confronted that day high on the western slopes of the Elkhorn Mountains.

Johnson is general manager of Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort, which several years ago opened The Trailhead on Main Street in downtown Baker City.

The Trailhead Stewardship Project's goals include making all sorts of trails in the Elkhorns and the southern side of the Wallowa Mountains — trails for hikers, horseback riders, mountain bikers and motorized vehicles — easier and safer to find and to travel, Johnson said.

To that end, The Trailhead, thanks in part to a \$5,000 grant from Travel Oregon, has hired Victoria Mitts to coordinate trail maintenance this summer.

Mitts also works for Anthony Lakes during the winter, Johnson said.

Kendall Cikanek, ranger for the Wallowa-Whitman's Whitman District, which includes the areas that the Trailhead Stewardship Project will focus on, said the partnership will help address the backlog of trail maintenance caused by flat or declining Forest Service recreation budgets over the past couple decades.

"This will really increase our capacity to do trail maintenance, and that's really important," Cikanek said. "It's exciting."

Over the years, he said, a lack of regular trail maintenance has resulted in sections of some trails becoming clogged with fallen trees, rocks and other debris.

These obstacles can be merely annoying for hikers, but Cikanek said they can be dangerous for equestrians.

"We recognize there are areas where it's difficult for people on horses, and that users are asking for better trail conditions," Cikanek said.

The Trailhead Stewardship Project makes the same point on its website — <http://thetrailheadbakercity.com/trailhead-stewardship-project/>.

Under the "background and history" heading, the website states: "While the trail systems throughout the Elkhorns and southern Wallowas are remarkable to say the least, these trails have deteriorated significantly (some are even unpassable), in large part due to lack of funding."

Cikanek said the Whitman District has only one-year-



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald, File, 2020

Flat or declining Forest Service recreation budgets have created a backlog of maintenance needs on hiking trails in the Elkhorn Mountains.

*"This will really increase our capacity to do trail maintenance, and that's really important."*

— Kendall Cikanek, ranger, Whitman Ranger District, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

round recreation technician — Jay Moore — and typically two or three summer employees, who focus mainly on ATV trails rather than hiking trails.

Cikanek said Moore will work with Mitts to determine where she can have the most benefit.

Johnson said the Trailhead Stewardship Project was a natural outgrowth of the work Anthony Lakes has done since 2018, when it was awarded a contract to manage Forest Service campgrounds and cabin rentals in the Anthony Lakes and Phillips Reservoir/Sumpter Valley areas.

In addition to taking care of the campgrounds, Johnson said employees started removing fallen logs and doing other basic maintenance on trails near those campgrounds.

This includes sections of the shoreline trails at Phillips Reservoir, the Elkhorn Crest National Recreation Trail and Black Lake trails near Anthony Lakes, and Dutch Flat trail, also in the Elkhorns, Johnson said.

The Trailhead Stewardship Project expands on those efforts — in multiple ways.

Mitts, who will be working three or four days per week, will make trail maintenance a priority, Johnson said.

"The idea is to bring trails that have been neglected over the years back to life, to make them passable and safer," he said.

But the project also will include upgrades to some trailheads, such as installing a garbage can, with regular collection, at the Cunningham Cove trailhead.

An employee already visits the area frequently because the trailhead is near Peavy Cabin, a rental cabin, Johnson said.

Similar improvements are also planned at the Elkhorn Crest trail's northern trailhead, just east of Anthony Lake campground.

The basic idea, Johnson said, is that regular maintenance, even something as simple as emptying a garbage can, can encourage forest users to be responsible.

"If it looks like it's taken care of, people are more apt to take care of it," Johnson said.

And he expects to see an influx of visitors for the second straight summer.

In 2020, with the pandemic prompting people to head outdoors where social distancing is simpler, national forests nationwide reported increases in visitor numbers.

On the Wallowa-Whitman, wilderness rangers and other employees reported a significant rise in the number of people visiting the Eagle Cap Wilderness and, to a lesser extent, the Hells Canyon Wilderness.

Visitor numbers were also noticeably higher at the campgrounds Anthony Lakes manages.

Johnson said the Trailhead Stewardship Project focuses on the southern part of the Wallowa-Whitman because existing groups, including the Wallowa Mountains Hells Canyon Trails Association, are already doing considerable amounts of trail maintenance in places such as the Eagle Cap Wilderness and Hells Canyon

## More Information

For more details about the Trailhead Stewardship Project, go to the project's website: <http://thetrailheadbakercity.com/trailhead-stewardship-project/>

National Recreation Area.

He said the Trailhead Stewardship Project will work with that group and any other user groups, including off-road vehicle clubs, to maximize the improvements to the area's trail system.

### Website features trail details

The project's website includes separate sections for five geographic areas — Northern Elkhorns, Southern & Central Elkhorns, Phillips Lake Recreation Area, Southwestern Wallowas and Southeastern Wallowas.

Each section has information about individual trails, including driving directions, cell service or its absence, and other details.

The goal, Johnson said, is to post updates on trail conditions on the website.

He encourages people to report what they find on trails through a comment feature on the website.

That information will help Mitts determine where her efforts can be the most effective this summer, and guide work schedules in 2022 and beyond.

For instance, Johnson said that if a hiker reports several logs blocking a particular trail, Mitts can try to get to that trail as soon as possible.

### Two trails are top priorities this summer

It's no coincidence that one half of this pair is the aforementioned Cunningham Cove trail.

Johnson said the trail is obscured by clumps of snowbrush and other plants that have thrived since the Sloans Ridge fire burned most of the mature trees along the trail in 1996.

The goal for Mitts this summer is to ensure the trail is obvious enough, and has sufficient signs, that hikers and horseback riders can follow it. The trail leads from the North Fork John Day River near Peavy Cabin to the Elkhorn Crest Trail.

The second major goal for trail work this summer is the Martin Bridge trail along Eagle Creek, in the southern Wallowas.

Although several miles of that trail from its southern terminus at Eagle Forks Campground upstream are in good condition, sections farther upriver are overgrown with brush, Johnson said.

### Beyond the trails

Although improving local trails is a chief goal of the Trailhead Stewardship Project, Johnson said the project — and specifically its website — is designed to promote Baker County as a tourist destination.

Below each individual trail description, the website has this statement in bold text: "While you're recreating in this region, please consider fueling up and winding down at our local food and drink establishments. This will not just enhance your vacation, but contribute directly to the great community that is taking care of these trails."

## Judge releases suspect in U.S. Capitol riot

■ Matthew Klein will be living with a couple from Baker County

PORTLAND (AP) — A judge has ruled that one of two Oregon brothers accused in the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol will be released from custody Friday to a third-party guardian, where he will be on home detention and GPS monitoring pending his trial.

U.S. District Judge Randolph D. Moss, of the District of Columbia, on Thursday granted Matthew Klein's pretrial release to a Baker County couple after refusing to allow him to stay with his parents. Moss last week cited text messages that showed Klein's mother and father warning Matthew's younger brother and co-defendant Jonathanpeter Klein not to broadcast their roles, noting "braggers get caught," according to court testimony and documents, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.

Matthew Klein, 24, and Jonathanpeter Klein, 21, both have pleaded not guilty to multiple charges.

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## Top 100 Critical Access Hospital



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## New At The Baker County Library

Patrons can reserve materials in advance online or by calling 541-523-6419. Drive-in hours at 2400 Resort St. are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from noon to 4 p.m.

Baker County Library's new additions this week include 23 bestsellers, 12 movies, 2 audiobooks, 29 children's books, and 85 other new books, including 40 that are available online. See everything new this week to Baker County Library District at [wowbrary.org](http://wowbrary.org).

### FICTION

- "People We Meet On Vacation," Emily Henry
- "That Summer: A Novel," Jennifer Weiner
- "The Good Sister," Sally Hepworth
- "Upright Women Wanted," Sarah Gailey
- "While Justice Sleeps: A Novel," Stacey Abrams

### NONFICTION

- "Metabohical: The Lure and the Lies of Processed Food, Nutrition, and Modern Medicine," Robert H. Lustig
- "Project Censored's State of the Free Press 2021"
- "The Premonition: A Pandemic Story," Michael Lewis
- "Women Evolve," Sarah Jakes Roberts
- "You Are Your Best Thing," Tarana Burke

### MOVIES

- "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood" (Family)
- "Hemingway" (Documentary)
- "Judas and the Black Messiah" (Drama)
- "The Last Vermeer" (Drama)
- "The Little Things" (Drama)