



# Issaquah Alps TRAILS CLUB

— EST. 1979 —

Dedicated to engaging the public to preserve, protect, and promote the land, wildlife, and trails of the Issaquah Alps, for future and present generations.

## *Newsletter of the Issaquah Alps Trails Club*

# THE ALPINER

**December 2020**

Remember to [Recreate Responsibly](#) this winter by checking avalanche conditions before heading out. [See current conditions here](#) and visit Recreate Responsibly's website to learn more about being "winter wise".

If you are interested in getting involved with the IATC in more ways, please fill out our [volunteer form](#) and let us know what you are interested in.

If you're hitting the trails this week, please remember to [Recreate Responsibly!](#)

### Mask up!

Please be prepared to cover your nose and mouth:

- When you are **within 6 feet** of anyone not in your group
- When you are in a **busy area**
- When you **go indoors**



#RecreateResponsibly [www.recreatorresponsibly.org](http://www.recreatorresponsibly.org)

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# IATC Advocates for Safety, Wildlife, and Recreational Access in Letter to WSDOT

Lindsay Frickle - December 17, 2020

The IATC is currently advocating to include a critical interchange at Tiger Summit, safe crossings for wildlife, and recreational access. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to build infrastructure that supports safety, recreation, and ecosystems. We sent the following letter to WSDOT:

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Attn: Mark Allison, Lead WSDOT Project Engineer

First and foremost, we are thankful for all the work that your team has put into addressing safety, wildlife and recreation in the planning of the SR-18 Deep Creek to Issaquah Hobart Road project thus far. This project represents a once in a generation opportunity to build the right infrastructure. Based on what is presented on the WSDOT website, we appreciate the inclusion of:

- Fish passage for critical salmon ecosystems
- Plans for additional lanes and straightening to address safety concerns
- Ongoing and planned work at the I-90 and Hwy 18 interchange

We are writing to ask for more **clarity regarding wildlife passage infrastructure** and to strongly urge the **inclusion of a Tiger Summit interchange** in this planning process.

**Wildlife** : We want to better understand whether the current plan addresses large mammal passages which affect both the ecosystem and traveler safety. We know from the work done by WSDOT on I-90 that increasing the bridge deck and fencing can be incorporated for a win-win for people and wildlife. If the project design does not address these issues it will lead to the development of a wall across the Issaquah Alps which once built cannot be easily modified. Please clarify how the planned bridges will support this wildlife need.

**Tiger Summit interchange** : The current plan, which we realize faces budget constraints, will build a divider across the road requiring vehicles to travel one direction adding additional travel time, GHG emissions and safety concerns. This is not an adequate long term solution and planning for the interchange should be included at this juncture.

- **Recreation**: Tiger summit is a central trailhead that currently sees significant traffic from hikers and mountain bikers. The absence of an interchange is incongruent with this recreation resource.
- **Working Forest**: Tiger and Taylor Mountains have state Trust Lands that are important revenue sources for public education and other services. It is critical that we build infrastructure to allow this industry to work efficiently and safely. The current design does not do this.
- **Industry** : Tiger Summit is home to significant communication and technology infrastructure for our region. Maintenance access to this area is necessary and would be better serviced, and safer, with an interchange. Furthermore, with the extent of truck traffic in this area we believe an interchange will best suit this industry as well.

Thank you for listening to our concerns and considering these community priorities. We look forward to seeing the updated designs and welcome the opportunity to speak with you more directly to ensure this project serves the safety, mobility, recreation access, and ecology of the Issaquah Alps.

David Dunphy, President [david.dunphy@issaquahalps.org](mailto:david.dunphy@issaquahalps.org)  
Lindsay Frickle, Executive Director [exec@issaquahalps.org](mailto:exec@issaquahalps.org)

CC: Mark Mullet [mark.mullet@leg.wa.gov](mailto:mark.mullet@leg.wa.gov), Bill Ramos [bill.ramos@leg.wa.gov](mailto:bill.ramos@leg.wa.gov), Lisa Callan [lisa.callan@leg.wa.gov](mailto:lisa.callan@leg.wa.gov)

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# Action Needed- Join us TONIGHT (December 22, 2020) for SR-18 Advocacy Forum

Hannah Wheeler - December 22, 2020

David Dunphy, IATC's Board President, will lead a discussion about Washington State Department of Transportation's current plan to expand Highway 18.

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## Why the IATC is Advocating for Wildlife Passages

Hannah Wheeler - December 21, 2020



### Wildlife Passages Provide:

1. Greater Habitat Connectivity
2. Safety for Animals
3. Safety for People

The Issaquah Alps Trails Club is advocating for the inclusion of safe wildlife passages in the design for the [expansion of SR-18](#), but why are these passages so important?

The beautiful landscape we call home is also an important habitat for many wildlife species. Large roads, like SR-18 or I-90, that run through them fragment this habitat and create danger for the animals that do try to cross them.

WSDOT reports that they receive 1,500 reports of vehicle collisions with wildlife each year. Out of those 1,500 collisions there are an average of 167 human injuries and one fatality. These numbers however, are likely low based on the number of roadkill removed from the highway each year. Most commonly, smaller species of animals are killed in these collisions such as raccoons, coyotes, opossums, and salamanders. Collisions with deer, elk, and larger mammals tend to be reported more frequently due to the property damage and human injury that is frequently involved.

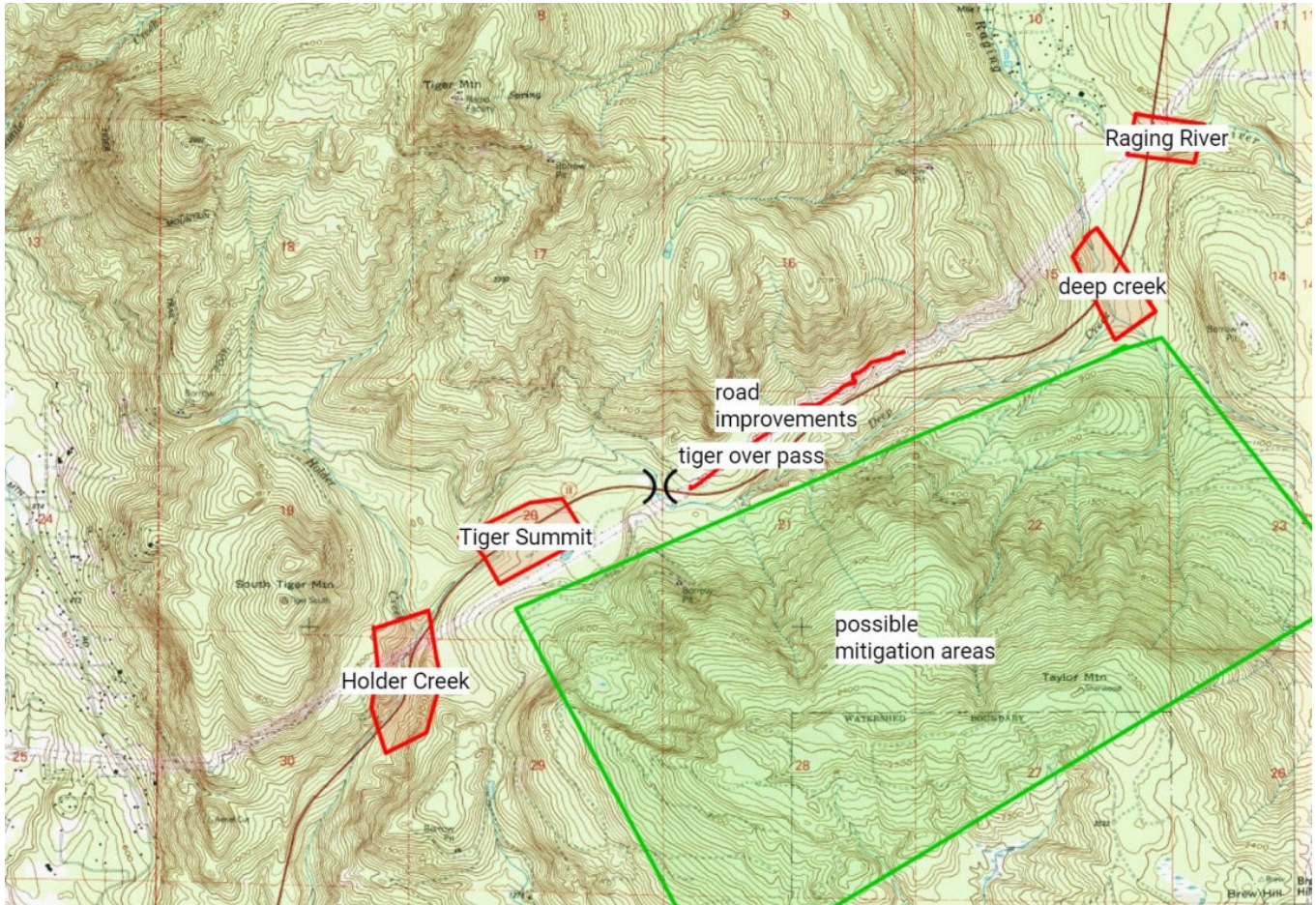
Collisions are not only dangerous for animals and people, they can be expensive. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that deer-car collisions cost an average of \$8,190 to repair and elk-vehicle collisions cost about \$25,319.

Fortunately, it turns out that if given an alternative to crossing the road, many animals will take it.

If you've driven over Snoqualmie Pass recently, you will have seen a stunning example of what safe wildlife crossings can look like. Back in 2004, a coalition of organizations led by [Conservation Northwest](#) came together to advocate for the inclusion of high-quality wildlife passages in the I-90 expansion project. This advocacy resulted in the installation of four wildlife under-crossings and two wildlife bridges over the highway which have since been frequently used by wildlife of all kinds.

Many passages are much simpler in design than the bridges and are still effective. Wildlife passages can include underpasses, overpasses, amphibian tunnels, large culverts, and tunnels. The type of crossing needed depends significantly on the landscape and the animals involved- some prefer large open crossings areas, and others prefer smaller tunnels. This highlights the need for high-quality design and planning in these projects; no one wants to build a wildlife crossing that won't work.

When it comes to SR-18, four areas have been identified as key for creating safe wildlife passages; Raging River, Deep Creek, Tiger Summit South, and Holder Creek all represent areas where habitat connectivity could be significantly improved with the inclusion of passages.



If you'd like to learn more about the SR-18 project and how you can help please visit our [project webpage](#) or read the [project briefing](#).

**Resources and Further Reading:**

[REI: Why Aren't More Wildlife Crossings Being Built?](#)

[National Geographic: How wildlife bridges over highways make animals-and people-safer](#)

[Wildlife Crossing Structure Handbook](#)

[Conservation Northwest- I-90 Wildlife Corridor Campaign](#)

[WSDOT: Reducing the Risk of Wildlife Collisions](#)

# The Great American Rail-Trail - Hike from Issaquah to Washington DC

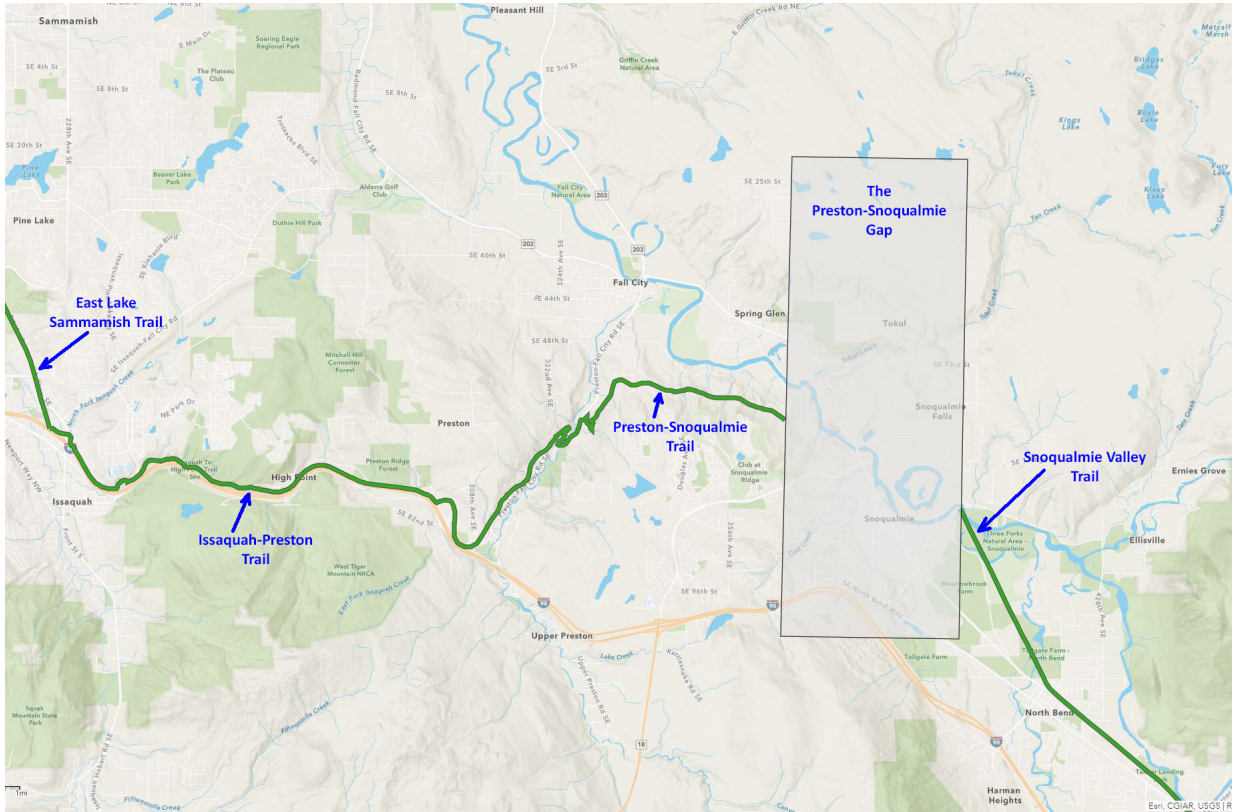
Tom Anderson - December 20, 2020

The Rail to Trails Conservancy has launched its most ambitious trail project to date - **The Great American Rail-Trail**. It will connect Washington DC to Washington State with a continuous trail for pedestrian and non-motorized travel. Covering over 3700 miles, mostly on former rail lines, it will connect people and communities across the nation. And little ol' Issaquah is on the preferred route!



*The Route of the Great American Rail-Trail, passing through Issaquah*

In our neck-of-the-woods, the route would utilize the existing **East Lake Sammamish Trail**, the **Issaquah-Preston Trail** and the **Preston-Snoqualmie Trail**. Heading further east, the route utilizes the **Snoqualmie Valley Trail**. So, here is the rub - a gap exists between Preston-Snoqualmie Trail and the Snoqualmie Valley Trail, as illustrated in the map below.



### *The Preston-Snoqualmie Gap*

Closing the gap is a problem that begs for a solution, but the solution has not yet been identified. The abutting trails are under the jurisdiction of the King County Parks, so no doubt they will be part of the future solution. This also fits within the conceptual domain of the Leafline Trails Coalition, a newly formed organization to advance the cause of regional trail interconnections ([leaflinetrails.org](http://leaflinetrails.org)).

Continuing eastward, the Snoqualmie Valley Trail connects nicely to the Palouse to Cascades Trail at Rattlesnake Lake, which takes travelers all the way to eastern Washington. Thus, the route from Seattle to Ellensburg is in pretty good shape with just the Preston-Snoqualmie gap to deal with. Overall, there are 15 gaps in the state totaling 182 miles out of 551 miles (70% complete)!

The story of trails in and around Issaquah just keeps getting better and better - further advancing our favorite nickname: **"Trailhead City."**

You can learn more about this great project here: [www.railstotrails.org/greatamericanrailtrail/](http://www.railstotrails.org/greatamericanrailtrail/)

# IATC Receives Outpouring of Support for Giving Tuesday

Lindsay Frickle - December 21, 2020

Thanks to our generous community of hikers, trail runners, and public land advocates (and some very popular t-shirts), the IATC raised over \$8,000 for the protection of the Issaquah Alps during our "Giving Tuesday" campaign! We are especially grateful for this outpouring of support during such a challenging year for so many. Every donation to the IATC is an investment in the trails, wildlands, and parks within our treasured Issaquah Alps. Our "Giving Tuesday" fundraiser will help the IATC engage dedicated volunteers and the public to preserve, protect, and promote the land, wildlife, and trails of the Issaquah Alps for present and future generations. Together, we will make a lasting impact on the trails and open spaces we all love. Thank you again to our generous donors for your ongoing support of our mission!

Funds raised will go straight to the heart of our mission -- advocacy. In spite of the impacts of 2020, IATC volunteers and staff have kept busy advocating for public lands, trails, and open spaces. We've made great strides on the following projects, many of which are still underway and in need of ongoing volunteer support and community voices:

- [SR-18 Expansion Project](#): Advocating for critical safety, access, and wildlife crossings in the Issaquah Alps.
- [Save Coal Creek](#): Advocating for the preservation of an active wildlife corridor between Cougar Mountain Regional Wildlife Park and Bellevue's Coal Creek Natural Area.
- [Save DeLeo Wall](#): Advocating to preserve Cougar Mountain trails, viewpoints, and habitats.
- [Green Issaquah Partnership](#): A collaborative effort between the City of Issaquah, Forterra, and community groups like IATC to restore and maintain our forested parks and open spaces.

Guided Hiking Program: Planning and restarting our popular guided hiking program in 2021 to support advocacy awareness and promote a love for wild places in our community.

If you would like to learn more about ways you can get involved as a volunteer in 2021, please fill out our volunteer form here: <https://www.issaquahalps.org/donate-and-volunteer>

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# The Apparatus

## Club Founder

Harvey Manning

## Executive Director

Lindsay Frickle ([exec@issaquahalps.org](mailto:exec@issaquahalps.org))

## President

David Dunphy (Governance Committee Chair)  
([president@issaquahalps.org](mailto:president@issaquahalps.org))

## President-Elect

Anne Newcomb (Public Engagement Committee Chair)

## Vice President of Advocacy

David Kappler (Advocacy Committee Chair)  
([advocacy@issaquahalps.org](mailto:advocacy@issaquahalps.org))

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Sarah Omiliak (Treasurer & Finance Committee Chair)

George Potter

Nate Smith (Philanthropy Committee Chair)

Ed Vervoort

Hannah Wheeler (Communications Committee Chair)

## Issaquah Alps Trails Club

P.O. Box 688

Issaquah, WA 98027

844-392-4282

Email: [contact@issaquahalps.org](mailto:contact@issaquahalps.org)

[www.issaquahalps.org](http://www.issaquahalps.org)



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