



# 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

March 2021



Our Annual Forum for Public Lands is happening this Thursday! Hear from former U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewel in our first ever virtual Annual Forum. Join over 300 friends and public lands advocates - you won't want to miss it!

[Register Here.](#)

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# IATC Welcomes Three New Board Members

Hannah Wheeler - March 22, 2021

The Issaquah Alps Trails Club is excited to welcome three new members to its board this March, Kelly Jiang, Mark Griffith, and Gaurav Sharma.



A native Washingtonian, Kelly now lives in Issaquah and loves being able to hike and run the network of trails in the Alps from her front door. By day, she works in the clean energy field, researching and conducting pilots for technologies to reduce the carbon footprint of the electricity system. After hours, she can be found running in the Issaquah Alps, backcountry skiing, or climbing all over Washington. She believes firmly in the value of wilderness accessibility for all, and is excited to work with IATC to preserve these wild spaces for future generations and ensure equitable access to these trails in our backyard.



Mark graduated in history and ended up helping build an e-commerce website in 1996, and joined a startup in San Francisco in 1999. In 2004 he and his family moved to Seattle where he subsequently joined Amazon in 2005 where he has worked for the last 16 years managing software teams for various business divisions. Mark and his family first settled in Talus on Cougar Mountain because of the access to the local trails. They now live on Squak mountain. Mark is an avid hiker, trail runner and mountaineer. He has run a 100 miler in the Issaquah Alps and is looking forward to another great spring in the local mountains the greater Cascades.



Gaurav is an IT consultant by profession with 16 years of Industry experience, working on Retail business transformations. He is passionate about photography, hiking, sports, trail running, bird watching and wildlife conservation. He is also an avid user of trails and after living in some very densely populated cities he's become a believer in "Public lands for Everyone, Everyone for Public lands." He has volunteered with the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival in 2017 and with both Evergreen & WTA at trail maintenance work parties. He also enjoys bird watching and wildlife tracking (Favorite Birds - Hummingbirds and Birds of Prey).

To see all of our current board members please visit: <https://www.issaquahalps.org/our-board>

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# SR-18 Letter Writing Continues

Hannah Wheeler - March 21, 2021

The IATC is asking for your continued support in writing letters asking for the inclusion of wildlife passages, a summit interchange, and recreation considerations in the SR-18 redevelopment design. This project represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve wildlife connectivity from the Cascades to the entire Issaquah Alps, enhance recreation infrastructure for all, and provide safe and efficient highway transportation for our region. Unfortunately, while the current plan proposed by WSDOT this month tries to address important safety concerns, it does not include these key features.

So far, the trails club has partnered with organizations such as the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, and King County Search and Rescue Association to advocate for this project. We provided a letter to WADOT that includes our requests for the inclusion of these key features, and created a project briefing guide to increase public awareness.

**We still need your help.** We are asking members of the public to write letters of support for the inclusion of these features to their representatives. Examples of how to find and contact your representative can be found at: <https://www.issaquahalps.org/hwy18-project> .

As we head into a busy spring hiking season in the Issaquah Alps, we are reminded of the importance of continued considerations of things like wildlife connectivity, sustainable recreation access, and safety in getting to and from our hiking trails. The SR-18 redevelopment project provides an opportunity to secure these things for the future as our area continues to grow, but we need to advocate for them now.

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# Hiking 101: The Ten Essentials

Ash Lehto - March 21, 2021

You may be an experienced hiker, or you just might be a novice to the trail. Whether or not you are just starting your hiking career, though, there are important things that every adventurer should know. The wilderness is a dynamic environment, and even if you've checked the weather or hiked a trail a few times before, situations can change rapidly and you need to be able to adapt. It's always better to be prepared than caught off guard, right? That's why every hiker is encouraged to carry the 10 Essentials.



The 10 Essentials was a list first compiled by The Mountaineers in the 1970s, in the book [Mountaineering: Freedom of the Hills](#). According to the Mountaineers, the [goal of this 10 Essentials list](#) is to answer two questions:

1. Can you prevent emergencies and respond positively should one occur?
2. Can you safely spend a night (or more) outside?

According to the Center for Disease Control, hiking is the third most common source of injuries that occur in the outdoors. [A 2005 study of the Mount Rainier and Olympic National Parks](#) revealed that for every one million visitors to the parks, there were 22.4 injuries. This might not seem like a startling number, but most of these injuries were from people hiking in daylight hours in the summer - in situations that wouldn't necessarily seem like the most dangerous. And when you think about the many millions of people that visit our national parks each year, the number of injuries grows. In her article on [the dangers of hiking](#), Wilderness First Responder Vicki Carrol notes that between the years 2011 and 2014, the National Park Service reported more than 11,000 search-and-rescue (SAR) incidents, with over 3300 hiking-related injuries.

A lot of the injuries and deaths that occur in the wilderness are attributed to people being inexperienced and unprepared - meaning that these situations could have easily been preventable. Sure, you can't control every variable in the outdoors, nor can you expect to be prepared for every possible scenario. Things like weather changes, trail conditions, wildlife, and other people might be out of your control. But there is something you do have power over - the supplies you have on hand, and what tools you can use in response to whatever situation you end up in. And simply bringing or wearing the proper hiking equipment can help you prevent and respond to an emergency, or even save a life.

We all (hopefully) know to dress for the weather, and to bring extra food and water "just in case". But there's more to being prepared than just those three basic things, and they aren't going to all necessarily help you in a rough situation.

That's where these 10 Essentials come in:

1. **Navigation**
2. **Sun Protection**
3. **Insulation**
4. **Illumination**
5. **First-Aid Supplies**
6. **Fire**
7. **Repair Kit and Tools**
8. **Nutrition**
9. **Hydration**
10. **Emergency Shelter**

This list may seem daunting or overwhelming, especially if you're a new hiker. Supplies like this might not be cheap, and it can be hard to identify what exactly you need for each item. So let's break it down.

**Navigation** - You might be able to find a physical map of the area you're hiking at a ranger station or a nearby town. Having a physical copy other than your phone is a great way to be prepared for the worst. But at the very least, you certainly can download a map onto your phone - just consider bringing a portable charger to make sure that your map doesn't run out of battery! A physical compass is also something that's not hard to find - and not too expensive! Just keep in mind that a cheap compass may not always be 100% accurate.

**Sun protection** - This one is fairly simple. Pack up some sunglasses and a small container of sunscreen, and maybe even a baseball cap. While the sun shining in your eyes isn't necessarily an "emergency", having these on hand can prevent you from getting a sunburn, or at least having to squint the entire trip.

**Insulation** - Extra clothing can be useful in many ways. Maybe your hiking buddy needs another layer, or you want to exchange one of yours because you're wet or sweaty. Perhaps the day started off sunny but the wind suddenly picked up. Or perhaps you're just on the trail for a lot longer than you anticipated, and the sun has started to set. Tossing an extra hat, set of gloves, socks, and/or a sweater might take up more room but won't add much weight, and can literally be a life saver.

**Illumination** - It's not uncommon to start a hike thinking that you'll be back before dark, only to discover that you've taken longer than you planned. No one's going to judge you for spending some extra time at the top enjoying the view! Bringing a flashlight or a headlamp, with extra batteries safely in a waterproof bag (think kitchen ziplock!), means that if the sun does disappear, you're not left in the dark. These supplies won't take up much room, and are pretty *light* to carry.

**First-Aid Supplies** - Whether someone just needs a band aid and disinfectant for a cut, or more seriously an ankle wrap and Ibuprofen, a first aid kit can help save the day. No, it's not the same as carrying around a hospital on your back, but it can still make a big difference. You can find lots of different pre-made first-aid kits online, or create your own at home! If you're doing the latter, check out "[How to Build a Hiker's First Aid Kit](#)" by the Washington Trails Association.

**Fire** - Hopefully you won't find yourself in a situation where you need to build a fire, but if things go wrong one of your main challenges will be to keep warm - and that's where those matches and firestarter come in. You can find emergency firestarting kits easily at outdoor supply stores, and they can range in sizes and weights while not costing you a pretty penny. Try getting waterproof matches, a lighter, or even candles - anything to keep the cold away through the night. Truly, hiking and preparedness are a perfect *match* ! All joking aside though, with our changing climate and the increase in wildfires, please be sure not to mess around with flames or build a fire without need. This essential might be able to save your life in a bad situation, but it can also take many lives if you aren't careful.

**Repair Kit and Tools** - Get yourself a little handy multitool and maybe a small roll of duct tape. These don't have to take up much room, and they never cease to be handy. After all, what problem can't duct tape fix?

**Nutrition** - You know your body's food needs better than anyone else, so when you hike you'll have your meals planned out. It's recommended that you have around 200 calories for each hour that you are out hiking, even if you don't plan to eat much. But consider tossing in a few extra protein bars, nuts, or dried fruits - maybe not for you, but at least for a fellow hiker who might not be as prepared. Have some nutrient-dense snacks that are high in carbs or fats, to help keep energy levels up for longer - future you might just appreciate it!

**Hydration** - A general rule of thumb is that for every two hours of moderate activity, you should have one liter of water. So when you prepare for a hike, you should estimate about how long you'll be out and how much water to pack. But what happens if you're out in the woods for longer than you've planned, or you come across someone who doesn't have water, or if the weather is just that much hotter than you expected? Having that extra H<sub>2</sub>O packed might add a bit more weight, but it's important to make the space for it - and there are ways to mitigate the extra effort. You can always pack a water bladder, so that as you drink the water it takes up less room than a regular bottle. Or, you can pack in a water filter such as a Lifestraw, so if you come across a water source you can safely drink it. Of course, when you think about extra hydration, you should always keep in mind where you're hiking - in a desert, you'll be less likely to find that wild water to clean, as compared with our wonderfully wet Washington winters.

**Emergency Shelter** - No matter the time of year, you should always have something to insulate you from the ground. Obviously if you're not planning to camp, you likely won't have a sleeping bag or pad on hand (unless you want to be extra comfortable in a pinch). But you can get an emergency tarp or space blanket that won't take up much room at all, and can come in handy for a variety of situations, to keep you warm, dry, and out of the elements.

It can be easy to get caught in the mindset that something might never happen to you. After all, if you're just going on a day hike and you've checked the weather, why would you ever need these things? But packing these supplies will do you more good than harm in the long run. At the very least, you've just carried some extra supplies and maybe gotten a better workout - what a win!

Millions of people hike each year without incident - don't let the fear of the unexpected stop you from going out! Just be mindful and take the time to bring those extra supplies. Packing the right gear means you can spend your hike focused on enjoying the great outdoors, while knowing in the back of your mind that you are ready to respond to the hand that Mother Nature deals you.

For more hiking preparedness from the IATC, check out the Hikes & Events page:  
<https://www.issaquahalps.org/hikesandevents>

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# Running in the backyard: the Issaquah Alps Provide the Perfect Training Ground for Competitive Runners

Brianna Traxinger - March 21, 2021

The greater Seattle area, famous for its urban appeal, is home to leaders of technology and business. Despite the development of this metropolis, Seattle and the surrounding suburbs are situated within minutes of beautiful urban parks and woodland environments. Outside Issaquah, Cougar, Tiger, and Squak mountains--affectionately known as the Issaquah Alps-- are connected by a system of trails that provide a forest sanctuary for not only Pacific Northwest wildlife, but also for birdwatchers, hikers, and nature lovers. However, it's not just the casual outdoorsperson who enjoys these trails: the Issaquah Alps are a major training ground for competitive ultrarunners.

Ultrarunning, which defines running distances greater than a marathon, is usually run on trails, sometimes over mountains and through remote wilderness areas. To prepare for ultra races-- which can be 50, 100, or even 200 miles-long-- runners perform frequent high-mileage, multi-hour training sessions, which are difficult to schedule around nine-to-five jobs and families. Unlike some professional sports such as football, professional runners often still work full-time and must fit in their training before sunrise or late at night. For Seattle-area runners, the Issaquah Alps make this balance possible.



*Kaytlyn Gerbin training on Tiger Mountain. Photo by Ely Gerbin.*

Kaytlyn Gerbin, an Issaquah resident with a PhD in bioengineering, works as a scientist at the Allen Institute in Seattle. Despite holding a high-level job, she's also a professional, internationally ranked runner, whose successes include a second-place finish in the 2018 Western States 100-miler in California and first-place at the 2020 Transgrancanaria 128-kilometer race in Spain. In addition to her professional running trophies, Gerbin is an accomplished mountaineer and endurance athlete who has set speed records on legendary Pacific Northwest routes such as the [Wonderland Trail](#), the Mt. Rainier [Infinity Loop](#), and the Ptarmigan Traverse. For Gerbin, access to local trails is critical for her to maintain balance between both her professions, prompting her move to Issaquah to be closer to the Alps. "After spending a few years living in Seattle while I was in graduate school at the University of Washington, my husband and I were ready to move closer to the trails. At that time I was driving to Issaquah or North Bend to train on the trails a few times a week, and had developed a love and appreciation for the Issaquah Alps." Gerbin regularly puts in 10 to 20 hours per week on her backyard trails. "I am fortunate to have access to trails close to home year round. The variety of terrain and elevation gain here without ever leaving Issaquah is perfect for my training - I can head to downtown Issaquah for a flat speed workout along the Issaquah-Preston trail, or climb up and over the peaks for vertical training. To me, this makes a big difference in my ability to manage time-consuming training with my work as a scientist," Gerbin said.

Rich Lockwood, a Seattle-area competitive ultrarunner who works a rigid schedule as an interventional radiology technologist at Harborview Medical Center, agrees that "having a trail system that you can get to quickly and easily is key" for maintaining ultrarunning fitness. Lockwood, who didn't own a car when he began running in the Issaquah Alps, commuted to the trails from Seattle through a combination of biking and bus rides, a feat that would not have been possible without the proximity of this expansive trail system. After a few years of success as a road runner, in 2017 Lockwood, also a snowboarder and mountaineer, transitioned his love of running to the trails and began training in the Alps up to three times a week. This regimen helped facilitate a quick rise in the mountain running scene, where later that year he took third place at the Beacon Rock 50K--his first-ever trail race--and second-place in his first 100-miler, the 2019 Teanaway Country 100. This course covers a staggering 30,000 feet of elevation gain, which Lockwood trained for by tailoring his training to match the race course: to prepare for the rigorous climbs of Teanaway, Lockwood concentrated his training to repeats on Tiger's Chirico trail, which gains nearly 2,000 feet in less than two miles. Likewise, Chirico's steep descent provided practice running quickly down steep, rugged terrain. Gerbin also favors the Alps for their ability to mimic the range of landscapes she might encounter in a long race, explaining that the "trails offer a variety of terrain, elevation gain, and rocks, roots, and other obstacles to train on. It often means I'm hiking up steep climbs (we don't only run!) and my pace varies a lot throughout a run on the trails," allowing her to train in the style of an endurance race. "I've trained for some of the world's most competitive and mountainous trail races by running in the Issaquah Alps. This is truly a world-class place to train," Gerbin said.



*Rich Lockwood placed 3rd in the 2020 IMTUF 100 mile race. Photo by Brianna Traxinger.*

While the Alps provide a technical training tool for training, many runners choose to train in the Issaquah Alps for the same reason they were drawn to the sport of trail and mountain running in the first place: simply because they love to spend time in nature. Yitka Winn, a Seattle-area outdoor writer and competitive ultrarunner who set the female course record at the 2019 Cascade Crest 100-mile ultra, winning the race for the second year in a row, also chose to reside near the Alps so that she could access them for both training and relaxation. Winn said that the "amazing steep trails and forest service roads" within the Alps provide "a killer workout while also enjoying fresh air, beautiful scenery, and wildlife." In addition to the elevation gain that these trails offer, Winn simply said that "they make training more fun!" She prefers the "natural beauty of the trails to the monotony and noise of the city (or treadmill) any day. I've come across deer, elk, bear, and even a mountain lion once in the last decade that I've been running in the Alps," Winn said.



*Yitka Winn running the Chirico Tenpeat on Tiger Mountain. Photo by Takao Suzuki.*

Training on steep, mountainous trails provides an obvious edge to those who race in rugged terrain, but some benefits of trail running in the Alps are less obvious. "Before I moved to the Pacific Northwest, I primarily ran on roads, and was plagued with common runner injuries like shin splints and stress fractures," Winn said. However, running consistently on softer, more forgiving surfaces (i.e., trails) and more varied terrain (i.e., not just flat, repetitive ground) pretty much eliminated overuse injuries for me," she continued, citing that trails have "helped [her] to run pretty much injury-free for the past decade." Lockwood, who regularly runs 40-60-miles per week, echoed this sentiment, explaining that running relatively soft trails (compared to pavement) allows him to train high-mileage with low impact, which is key for injury prevention. Lockwood added that unlike many of Washington's mountains, the Issaquah Alps are runnable year-round, as they don't receive heavy, consistent snowfall, providing "continuous training in the off-season to keep you fit." This allows for a smoother transition into race shape during the summers, further decreasing the risk of overuse injuries that are common when increasing training loads, he said.

Although Winn, Gerbin, and Lockwood are all high-level athletes, the competitive nature of running isn't their main attraction to the trails: it's the community, made up of a mix of amateur and professional runners, that makes running in a shared trail system special. "The community of folks that enjoy these trails is incredibly vibrant, and it is fun to see familiar faces out there when I run the same trails over and over again. I have had so many wonderful conversations with hikers and runners alike while out running in the Alps," said Winn, who originally met her husband George during a long trail run at Tiger Mountain. "We have put in countless training miles together in these hills over the years," Winn continued. Winn, who is also a new mom, currently enjoys the nearby trails as a way to spend time with her family in nature. "Living within 20 minutes of the Issaquah Alps is the best of all worlds for me because not only can I get out for trail runs during the week, it also feels amazing to be able to make mountains a regular part of daily life with my baby girl and my three step kids," Winn said.



*Yitka Winn pacing Rich Lockwood at the 2018 Teanaway Country 100 mile race. Photo by Brianna Traxinger.*

For people who are drawn to the perks of city life but still desire to be near nature, the Seattle area, with its proximity to mountains and forest, provides the perfect compromise. "I lived in tiny mountain towns in rural Colorado for a number of years in my twenties, and the trail access out my back door was fantastic. But career opportunities there were limited and at some point, in order to grow in my career and ever get financially stable enough to start a family, I felt like I needed to move back to a more urban area," Winn said. The Issaquah Alps provide the mountain access that many city-dwellers, like Winn, crave, connecting many surrounding urban areas with a shared woodland sanctuary, which brings together nature-lovers of all types. While not everyone who enjoys the Issaquah Alps is a serious runner, or a runner at all, we're all drawn to the trails for the same reasons: to escape city life for a few hours, get exercise, and visit with friends. Some just enjoy the trails at a faster pace, in preparation for the next big race.

# Bellevue School Collaborates with Save Coal Creek

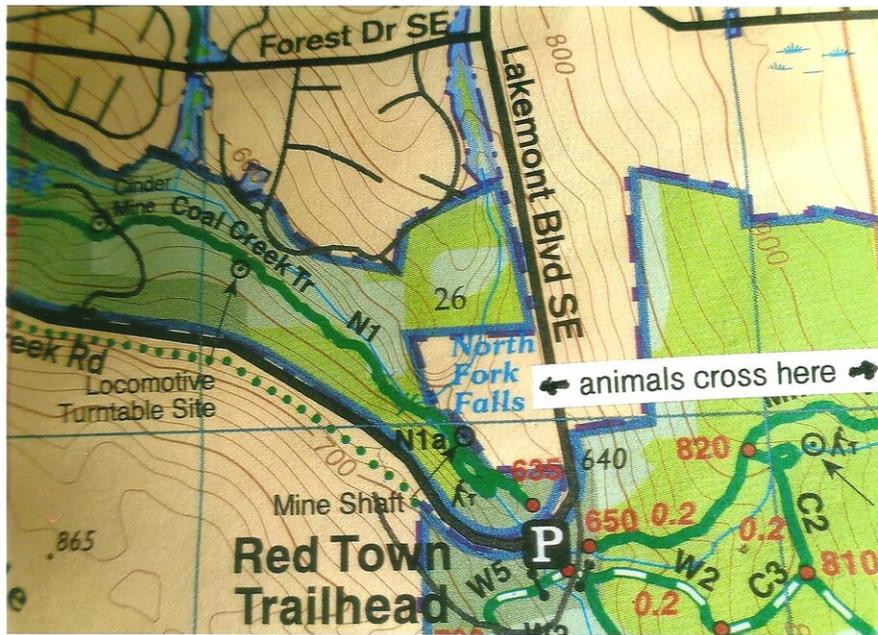
Lindsay Frickle - March 21, 2021

In March, advocacy leaders Steve Williams and Sally Lawrence presented the case for Save Coal Creek to an AP environmental science class in Bellevue. These high school students are being challenged to take a look at environmental impacts of proposed land use. The teacher, who is new to this area, saw the Save Coal Creek campaign signs (sponsored by IATC) and reached out to our organization to inquire about a possible collaboration.



The presentation to the class was about the history and environmental significance of that parcel of land and what might happen if it was developed. Students had a lot of questions about what that a housing development might do to the water quality and wildlife crossings between Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park and Coal Creek Natural Area.

Students visited the Coal Creek Natural area to see the site firsthand and imagine the impact a development might have on the historic property and adjacent parklands.



*The site is on the west side of Lakemont Blvd. in tan under 'North Fork Falls' (protected park lands are in green).*

As the curriculum progresses, students are learning about how proposed land action gets approved and how communities can give input through contacting elected officials and making comments at public hearings. Students are being asked to analyze the varied lenses from which we can look at this topic. The class is talking about the tension between developers and the public, and thinking critically about how sustainability concerns relate to making a profit, and how development impacts our planet. Students understand the need for housing but aim to try to find ways for the developer to adjust current plans to mitigate the impact of this development, or have the city help the developer find a new site elsewhere and save this property for its conservation values and as a critical link between the two parks.

The students are being challenged to create a final project which evaluates the situation and proposes what they think are the best next steps. Products of these projects might include posters, infographics, or brochures that illustrate their points of view.

The IATC is happy to see such an important real world situation being studied by local youths as they develop critical thinking around the topic of public land conservation and advocacy. Visit [issaquahalps.org/advocacy](http://issaquahalps.org/advocacy) for more information about Save Coal Creek.

# King County begins another "gap treatment" Project in Cougar Mountain Wildland Park

Hannah Wheeler - March 18, 2021

This spring, King County is planning another "gap treatment" project in Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park. This involves cutting down some broadleaf trees like red alder and bigleaf maple at seven different sites in the park to make room for new conifer trees. This project won't affect any trails, but you may be able to see some of this work being done from trails within the park.

## Creating a Healthy Forest



### Current Forests

- Overcrowded with similar types of trees
- Susceptible to disease
- Limited habitat for wildlife



### Actions We Take

- Make room for trees to grow
- Plant a diversity of tree species
- Protect trails for future use



### Future Forests

- Diversity of wildlife habitat and tree species
- Thriving forests to explore
- Resistant to wildfire, insects, and disease

## Why do we need gaps in the forest canopy?

As you may have noticed on your hikes around Cougar Mountain, many of the forests there are dominated by broadleaf trees such as red alder and bigleaf maple. While these trees are wonderful to see and do play an important part in our forest ecosystems, their abundance doesn't reflect the composition of our forests historically. Before many of these forests were clear-cut, mined, and abandoned, they were dominated by conifers such as Douglas-fir, Western Hemlock, and Cedar trees. According to King County "By creating these conifer-dominated patches in the forest, we increase species diversity and restore the ecologically important role these long-lived conifers provide."

## Why are conifers so important to our forests?

Conifers live much longer than most broadleaf trees. Trees like Douglas-fir can live anywhere from 500 to 1,000 years! In contrast, the typical lifespan of a red alder is about 100 years, and many of the red alders that exist in Cougar Mountain Wildland Park are already reaching the end of that lifespan. By planting conifers, we can increase the resilience of our forests over time. Additionally, climate change

predictions show hotter, drier summers ahead. Broadleaf trees are less well-adapted to dry climates and may suffer in the future, whereas conifers could provide some stability in forests. Finally, conifers store more carbon than broadleaf trees. According to King County "These projects increase forest carbon storage over time compared to a no-action management approach - the large and fast-growing conifers more than recapture the carbon that is lost by the dead and dying red alder."

### **What steps are involved in this project?**

The county will start by cutting down some of the broadleaf trees across seven sites in Cougar Mountain Wildland Park. The total project area will include 11 acres, but not every broadleaf tree within that area will be cut down. Between one and five healthy overstory red alder or bigleaf maple per acre will be retained, as well as all conifers, and several trees may also be girdled to slowly create snags for wildlife. The county will then plant a mixture of native conifers including Douglas-fir, western redcedar, and grand fir. They will maintain the planted trees throughout 2021 and 2022 by removing vegetation that threatens the seedlings and invasive plant removal.

If you would like to learn more about how King County is building healthy forests please visit: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/services/parks-recreation/parks/parks-and-natural-lands/natural-lands/forest-stewardship.aspx>

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

## Communications and Community Engagement Manager

Hannah Wheeler ([communications@issaquahalps.org](mailto:communications@issaquahalps.org))

## Board of Directors

Tom Anderson

Denice Carnahan

Kaytlyn Gerbin

Mark Griffith

Kelly Jiang

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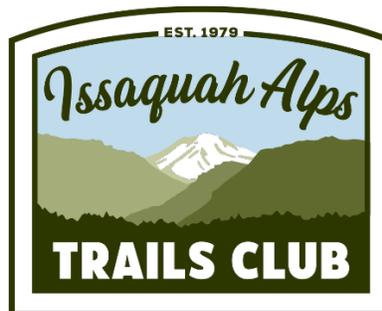
P.O. Box 688

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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