



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.

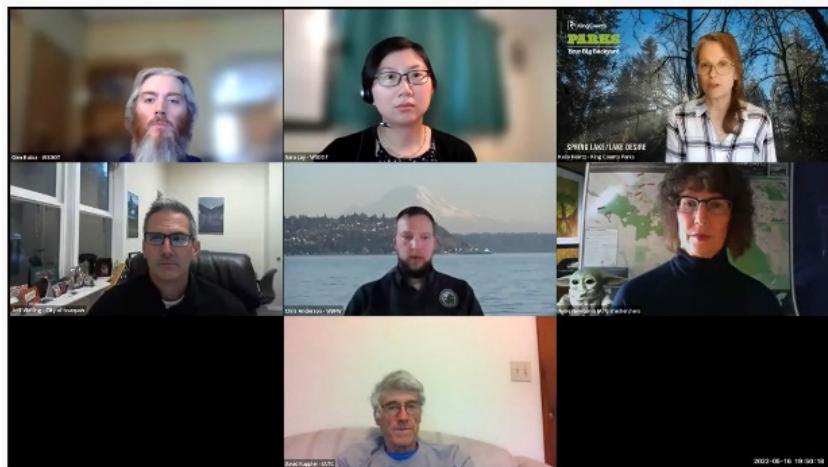
Newsletter of the Issaquah Alps Trails Club

THE ALPINER

June 2022

News – Events – Hikes

Highlight of the Month – The (Virtual) Public Lands Forum



IATC Joins the Eastside Climate Action Challenge

Paul Winterstein - June 30, 2022



IATC is joining people on the eastside and around the country by joining the Climate Action Challenge to reduce our individual household emissions of greenhouse gasses to protect the Alps from the effects of climate change.

If Only

Last September I stood on the summit of Desolation Peak in the North Cascades and peered to the west, trying to see a distant mountainside that had recently burned. The park ranger stationed at the lookout next to where we stood said there were actually two scars on the land from fires that we could see. One fire was started by a lightning strike. A natural cause of fire which the Park Service only monitored and allowed to burn without intervention. As long as there was no threat to life or property, their policy was to let it burn. It was nature's way.

The second fire was different. It was started by a careless or intentional person, I don't remember which. But the Park Service was all over that one. They accepted the risks and fought to contain it with people and equipment. Why? Why let one burn and not the other? The ranger made it sound rather simple, and it is, really. Allow the natural process to run its course, but put all your might into fighting the unnatural, the human-caused disaster.

If the choice of what to do about climate change was as simple as choosing what to do about a forest fire, I probably wouldn't be writing this article.

" Climate change will change habitats. Nothing works in isolation. If the climate changes then the forest changes, the plants change, the animals change. "

- Dr. Julian Bayless from the video "The Lost Forest"

Of all the challenges IATC has taken on over the years to protect the land and wildlife of the Alps, there's never been anything quite like climate change. Some of us may not live long enough to actually see or experience the long-term impact. And we don't know if negative impacts will happen slowly, over many years, or more suddenly. Has it already started? This is a global matter, how can what I do locally have an impact locally? It might be difficult to answer these questions and others like it with certainty, but that's not the point. Our mission is to preserve and protect the Alps for current **and future**

generations. When I think of that phrase "and future generations", I typically picture today's forest as the future's old-growth forest. One that my decedents will know without ever knowing it differently. And for this reason, and others, is why I have joined my colleagues at IATC in the Climate Action Challenge.

The Climate Action Challenge

A nationwide effort sponsored locally by the cities of Bellevue, Issaquah, Mercer Island, and Redmond, the purpose of the challenge is to bring people together in community and give them tools to assess their home's potential for reducing their emissions, and offer legit recommendations on steps you can take to achieve those reductions. From there you can form your own team or join one that already exists. Households within a team will be able to see the goals and results of the other team households. Since we're already connected by our commitments to IATC, we've created the Issaquah Alps Trails Club Board team.

Another option is to form your own community or join one that already exists. Households within a community can't see the goals and results of the other households, but they can see the rolled up results of the whole community. So it seems that teams are for households somewhat familiar with one another, and communities are for those with or without a team, but who want to be part of something bigger without revealing your household goals and results. We at IATC have also created the Friends of the Issaquah Alps community, and we hope that everyone joins us here.

signing up

Of course there are more details about the program, but it's not that complicated. To participate is free and the only pressure comes from within and how committed you are at achieving your goals-or "actions" as the system calls them.

To get started, go to <https://eastsideclimatechallenge.org/communities> to create your household account and join the Friends of the Issaquah Alps community. Once you complete the Getting Started steps you'll be fully underway. We hope that you team up with friends, co-workers, family, or any other group that shares your willingness to hold themselves accountable for actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Watch This Space

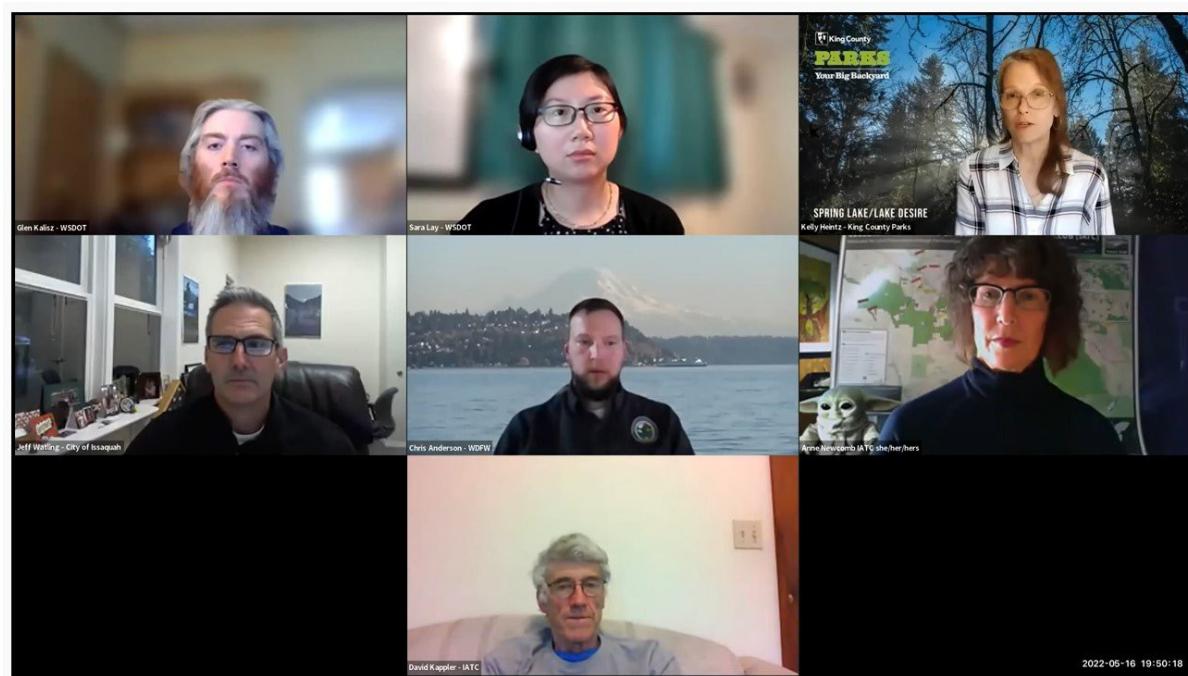
Throughout the challenge we will be publishing educational and scientific articles about climate change. We will also continue working with our partners People for Climate Action, Forest Health Watch, the City of Issaquah, and King County to offer programs and hikes that educate and inspire to keep up the effort. Taking concrete steps to reduce your greenhouse gas emissions can be made easier when you're connected to a supporting community. Let's walk this path together.

Wildlife In the Alps - Public Lands Forum Recap

Paul Winterstein - June 30, 2022

Many lands in the Alps have been preserved and wildlife habitat protected, but reconnecting this habitat with the wider landscape is still a work in process.

These lands have been impacted by human development, and the presence and overall health of the wildlife are excellent indicators of how well we are all doing to restore their habitat to its natural state. Towards these goals, one theme that emerged from our online Public Lands Forum on May 16th is that wildlife corridors and "connections" are just as vital as the quality of the land, the water, and the habit, and that these connections aren't just between landscapes-they include the relationships between land owners and managers and the individuals charged with their care. This Forum provided IATC another opportunity to convene our partners to share how their work benefits wildlife.



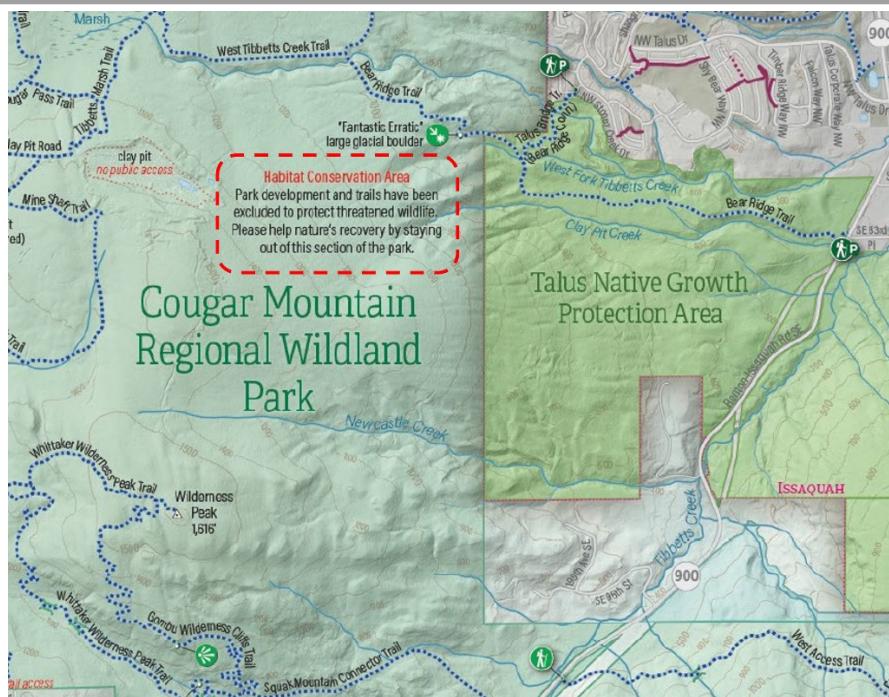
From upper left: Glen Kalisz and Sara Lay of the WA Dept. of Transportation; Kelly Heintz of King County Parks; Jeff Watling of the City of Issaquah; Chris Anderson of the WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife; and Anne Newcomb and David Kappler of IATC.

NOTE: Below are just some of the highlights that our panel of experts shared during the Forum. For each of them, links have been provided that jump right to the beginning of their moment in front of the camera so that you can see and hear all of what they had to say.

[Chris Anderson](#), a wildlife biologist from the WA State Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the fourth of our four speakers for the evening summed it up nicely when he said that the previous speakers had built a nice picture of what he was going to speak about. The acquisitions of land for preservation that King County and the City of Issaquah are doing increases the productivity of the Alps for wildlife by

assuring a diversity of structure and species and type, and not just having a monoculture. Further, the transportation corridors that the WA State Department of Transportation is building improves the landscape's permeability for wildlife.

Chris also highlighted the need for homeowners to not endanger the lives of large animals, such as black bears, by securing our garbage and making sure our birdfeeders are well out of their reach. When bears supplement their natural diets with people food they become habituated to living close to humans and that inherently puts their lives at risk. A recent case in point is that of a large young bear that was making the news because of all of his raids on garbage cans while being too elusive for capture. This bear had been collared as a youth and had gotten so large that Chris and others were concerned that the collar itself was becoming a danger. It hadn't fallen off yet though it was designed to do so. Residents of the south side of Squak Mtn. were particularly concerned about this bear and were speaking up. At the time of the Forum the bear was still at large, still out-growing his chosen home among people. Tragically, it was later reported that officials were forced to kill this bear because of the unacceptable risk he posed to people. Yes, there is good habitat for bears in the Alps, some of the best in western Washington in fact. But what good is that if we must kill them because they are gorging themselves on our food and bird feeders? Not good for the bears, for sure.

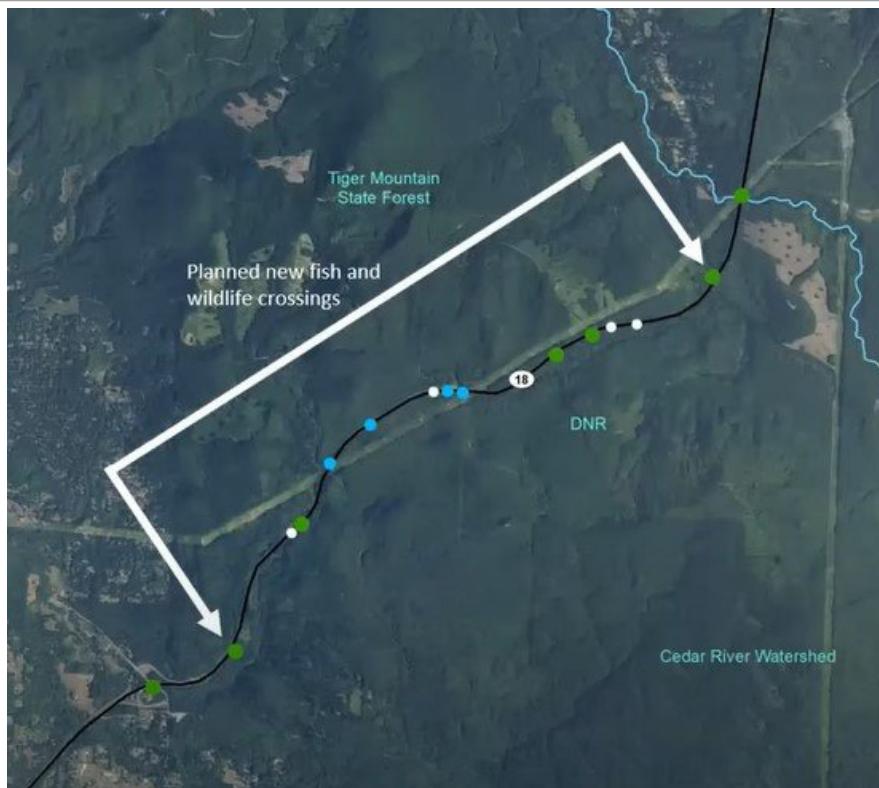


[Kelly Heintz](#) of King County, who has been instrumental in the acquisition of lands within the Alps for conservation said that one of the County's goals is to "preserve biological diversity by maintaining a variety of ecosystems across the landscape, and making sure that we're not fragmenting the landscape. We're providing the connections." She continued, "This approach assumes that ecosystems managed to preserve their native composition, structure, and function will retain the vast majority of species that evolved within these ecosystems."

The eastern face of King County's Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park not only provides a link to Squak and Tiger mountains, it is also designated as a Habitat Conservation Area (HCA), a good example of this management strategy. Have you ever wondered why there is a vast stretch of the Cougar Mtn. park with no trails? The reason is printed right on the park map within the HCA where it says "Park development and trails have been excluded to protect threatened wildlife. Please help nature's recovery by staying out of this section of the park." The City of Issaquah's adjacent Talus

Native Growth Area combines with the HCA to create one of the largest tracks of protected wildlife habitat in the Alps.

Jeff Watling, the City of Issaquah's Director of Parks and Community Services has played a critical role in two recent land acquisitions that the City has made. One being the 33 acre Bersgma acquisition on Cougar Mtn. just north of the Talus neighborhood, and the other a 20-acre parcel on the northeast slopes of Squak Mtn. just north of Squak Mtn. State Park. His strong connections with other regional players, such as the King County Conservation Futures Advisory Committee and the Trust For Public Land also made a difference. Speaking during the Forum, Jeff stressed the gateway roles these lands will play in connecting trailheads on or closer to the valley floor with the larger King County and State Parks.



The two existing wildlife crossings on SR-18 will be improved and 13 new ones will be added.

Glen Kalisz is a Habitat Connectivity Biologist with the WA State Dept. of Transportation (WSDOT). His job is to help animals safely navigate (cross) the State highway system by finding ways to reduce vehicle-wildlife collisions. Major roadways like SR-18 and I-90 are significant barriers to wildlife and fracture the wildlife habitat conserved on either side of them. Glen displayed a map provided by the Muckleshoot Tribe that showed the radio collar trackings of multiple cougars east of SR-18 and south of I-90, prior to the opening of the recently completed wildlife crossing improvements in the Snoqualmie Pass area. This data clearly shows that these roadways are barriers to cougar movement. "If a highway becomes a barrier to a cougar, it is likely a barrier to most species", said Glen.

Inspired by the conservation work of others, Glen brings the perspective "that it's WSDOT's turn to

establish a wildlife corridor to...reconnect the large parks west of SR-18 back into the greater Cascades ecosystem and beyond." Those "large parks", of course, are the Issaquah Alps. Glen proceeded to describe how the planned improvements on SR-18 are going to literally stitch back together the habitat on both sides of the roadway.



Following the question and answer period of the full panel, the Forum concluded with a wildlife photo presentation by [Izzy Edwards](#). I will spare you my words to describe Izzy and her work, and instead encourage you to click on her name to jump right to her presentation at the Forum. Suffice it to say that if all the previous words and images in the program about wildlife, habitat, and conservation didn't help you feel closer to the land and its wildlife, then Izzy's artistry is sure to connect you to the beauty and wonder of nature.



Events

Save Coal Creek at the Newcastle Art Walk, Saturday, July 23rd.

Stop by our table to learn about wildlife and coal mining in the area. From 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM at the Avalon Newcastle Commons. To volunteer or for more information call (425) 351-6881

[Parkadilly Kid's Concert and Fair](#) at Lake Sammamish State Park, Sunday, July 17th.

Stop by the IATC table to say "hi" and sign-up for some upcoming hikes for kids.



[Debbie's View on Squak Mtn.](#)

Thursday, July 7, 4:00 - 7:00 PM

Join us on a hike to Debbie's View on Squak Mtn. and learn how you can join IATC in our land conservation and trails advocacy.



[Forest Health Hike on Tiger Mtn.](#)

Sunday, July 10, 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

IATC is partnering with the Forest Health Watch program to gather soil samples for the investigation of the role microbes play in the dieback of redcedar and hemlock trees.



East Ridge Trail on Squak Mtn.

Tuesday, July 19, 4:00 - 7:00 PM

Come climb the East Ridge Trail on Squak Mtn. and learn how you can join IATC in our land conservation and trails advocacy,



Teddy Bear Hike

Sunday, July 24, 9:00 - 11:00 AM

A family-friendly hike for younger kids along the Swamp Trail on Tiger Mtn



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