



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

August 2022

News – Events – Hikes



Come visit our booth at Salmon Days, October 1 & 2.

IATC Comments on Presidential Order to Protect Old-Growth Forests

Kelly Jiang - August 31, 2022



During his visit to Seattle on Earth Day 2022, President Joe Biden issued an [executive order](#) directing the US Forest Service and other federal land managers to identify ways to protect our nation's forests, especially old-growth forests. During the public comment period, IATC submitted a letter expressing our comprehensive understanding of preference for proper forest management. To access all submitted comments online, visit this [Public Reading Room](#) hosted by the US Forest Service.

Below are the comments that IATC submitted. What do you think? Leave your comments down below.

August 30, 2022

RE: Executive Order 14072 #NP-3239

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Secretary Haaland,

Thank you for taking comment on President Biden's Executive Order on Strengthening the Nation's Forests, (14072 #NP-3239) Communities, and Local Economies. Forests across the United States provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, habitat for native wildlife and plants, and jobs in both the outdoor recreation and sustainable forestry sectors. Preserving and protecting old-growth forests is a simple and cost-effective strategy to sequester carbon; this will only become more important as the climate crisis intensifies.

National forests in the Northwest are some of the most carbon-dense in the world - they store more carbon per acre than even the Amazon rainforest. In addition to being stored in the trees, carbon is stored in soil organic carbon in healthy old-growth forests. As soil, on a global scale, contains more carbon than the atmosphere and all vegetation combined, protection of forests must include practices to ensure soil health and carbon sequestration.

As climate change intensifies, simply preserving mature forests, even if the trees themselves may be old, is not enough. Particularly in the mountain west, forest practices such as thinning and prescribed burning will be necessary to mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfires that can destroy old-growth forests. Given that climate change is leading to longer, hotter, drier summers, once burned, these forests may never have the chance to return to an old-growth state, even if they are fully set aside for protection. Thus, active management to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires will be vital to ensuring that our forests remain a carbon sink, rather than a source.

Currently, mature forests in the Pacific Northwest are defined as those containing trees 80 years or older. This definition is incredibly simplistic - for instance, forests on Cougar Mountain, within the Issaquah Alps that our organization advocates for, technically qualify as mature forests, as they contain mostly broadleaf trees (bigleaf maple and red alder) over 80 years old. However, true old-growth forests in our area are primarily composed of conifers, which have a much longer lifespan. Now, county foresters are using active management techniques like gap treatment to remove some of the broadleaf trees that are reaching the end of their lifespan, and planting conifer saplings. Over time, this will result in greater carbon sequestration in the forest, habitat for greater biodiversity, and forests that are more resilient to climate change. Similar active management techniques may need to be taken in other forests to encourage the development of healthy old-growth forests.

Old-growth forests are not defined simply by the presence of old trees. Myriad other factors, including the mix of tree species, tree spacing, micro-habitats formed by dead trees, soil microbiota, and more are critical to the ecosystem function of old-growth forests. In addition to setting aside federal lands containing old growth trees for preservation, the administration should work with Tribal governments, scientists, and local agencies to determine and apply best practices for ensuring that forests containing older trees have all of the factors that define a mature and healthy forest.

We urge the US Department of Agriculture and US Department of Interior to take a holistic view of forest health, and use the best available science, expertise, and traditional ecological knowledge to not only preserve forests, but also to ensure that they retain their rich biodiversity, sequester carbon, and are resilient to a changing climate.

Sincerely,
Paul Winterstein
Executive Director
Issaquah Alps Trails Club

Advocacy Update - August 2022

David Kappler - August 31, 2022

IATC is actively working with multiple partners on trail and park planning on existing public lands and the acquisition of a number of parcels with high value for wildlife, connectivity for wildlife and humans, and appropriate low impact recreational uses. Our work is often done in conjunction with community-based groups that team with us for our support and to learn from our decades long work with government agencies and elected officials.

This review of some of our major efforts will be from west to east in the Alps. Starting with western Cougar Mtn., there are two parcels that we have been hoping to see as park land even before the club was formed in 1979. These are DeLeo Wall property on the southwest of Cougar Mtn. and the former Milt Swanson property across Lakemont Blvd. from the Red Town Trailhead. The Save DeLeo Wall campaign is pleased that King County has committed money to acquire the property and sees it as a significant addition to Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park. A Forest Practices Permit for clearcutting much of the property was renewed last year, but has not been activated. So far the owners are not interested in selling and the County cannot force a sale.

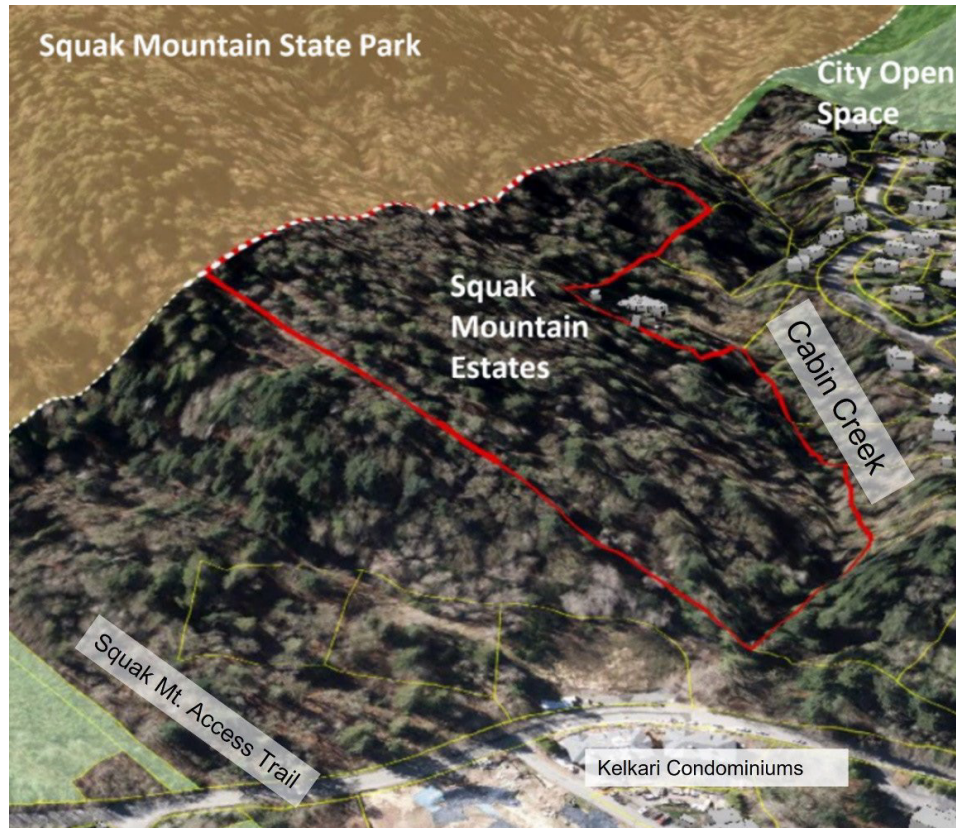


Steve Williams led a Red Town history hike on August 28. The "Save Coal Creek" signage served as a reminder of the vital connection the Isola parcel plays between the two adjoining parks.

The former Milt Swanson property is the subject of a proposed development permit for over 30 units by Isola Homes. The property is in the Bellevue city limits and the hearing on the permit application is expected to occur this fall. We are strongly supporting the Save Coal Creek campaign which has raised significant money to hire a top environmental lawyer and consultants with expertise in the various environmental and safety issues presented by the development. The Mountains to Sound Greenway has strongly endorsed the acquisition of this property by the City of Bellevue for a park that would adjoin the Coal Creek Natural Area.

On the eastern side of Cougar Mountain and the western side of Squak Mountain the club is working with the City of Issaquah and King County on a number of property acquisitions and trail connections.

The City of Issaquah has made a purchase of 20 acres that adjoin the NE corner of Squak Mountain State Park and offers some great trail potential routings on city open space and the State Park. We are helping with scouting of possible trail alignments that will significantly add to the Squak Mtn. system. The parcel, formerly known as "Squak Mountain Estates" is illustrated in the following 3D map:



On the subject of State Parks, we have been working closely with the trail planning going on in Lake Sammamish State Park. Our working relationship with State Parks has never been stronger than it is now.

We have a continuing positive relationship with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The DNR has two major roles. One is to manage and acquire lands that are in a Natural Resources Conservation Area (NRCA) and to manage other lands to produce income for underlying owners. The underlying owners may include the K-12 public school system, state colleges, state prisons, a county, or other public institution. On those lands they have to follow numerous environmental regulations, but also produce income for the underlying owner. An over-simplified description of the situation on Tiger Mtn. is that the north side is in an NRCA and the south side of the mountain is in timber production/revenue generation status. Many of our trails and treasured environmental features are in the areas where the DNR is mandated by law to produce income and that may reduce the recreational qualities we value.

The DNR has significant timber lands on Taylor Mtn. and the western part of Rattlesnake Mtn. and the Raging River area. Twenty years ago we regularly led hikes in these areas and there are some real treasures with viewpoints and water related features. Our vision for these areas is very incomplete and outdated. We need a group of explorers to develop our vision for these areas. We need to better understand which lands may have a higher and better use as conservation sites and need to be

acquired, and where trails should be located even if that land has been logged or will be logged in the future.

IATC has a long history of knowing the land better than its owners, regardless if they're public or private. We can still say that for much of Cougar, Squak and Tiger mountains, but there is a bunch of land that is public or should be public south and east of SR-18 upon which we have limited and outdated information. Our exploration activities of 40 years ago on Cougar, Squak and Tiger mountains need to be duplicated on the eastern and southern edges of our Issaquah Alps.

Our work in these less known areas will be exploratory with recommendations about any private land that should be acquired by the state, identification of areas that should receive special protections and establishment of new trails and what uses should be allowed on any existing trails and any new trails that are proposed.

Those with special interest in these lands south and east of SR-18 or those who want to be involved in exploratory work in these areas are asked to contact us and watch for Exploratory Hikes listed in the Alpiner and the events page on our website.

Raising Taxes to Preserve Land: What Does Proposition 1 Mean to the Issaquah Alps?

Paul Winterstein - August 31, 2022

Part 1 of 2 about [Proposition 1 in the upcoming November general election](#) and how the Conservation Futures property taxes it seeks to extend have already shaped the landscape and benefitted the wildlife of the Issaquah Alps.

Habitat Preserved

The parking lot was empty this grey Sunday in November, promising solitude on the trails for this new hike of discovery on Taylor Mtn. Just off the Issaquah-Hobart Rd., King County's Taylor Mtn. Forest Trailhead looks a lot bigger than it needs to be, but when you realize that the trails it services also accommodates mountain bike riders and equestrians and their necessary larger trucks and horse trailers, the lot's emptiness, rather than its size quickly became the bigger surprise. But hey, good for me.

Having lived on and explored the trails of Squak Mtn. for the better part of four decades, Taylor Mtn. and its wild places were more unknown to me than they should be. But as the fall season began to take hold, these public lands held some of the upper reaches of Issaquah Creek that needed to be explored. My chosen destination was Holder Creek, the drainage that holds a portion of SR-18 and separates Tiger Mtn. to the northwest and Taylor Mtn. to the southeast. Recent news that the Issaquah salmon hatchery had lowered its weir and late-season salmon were now coursing upstream certainly held promise.



Not long into the hike and just after stepping over a small stream splashing down from Tiger Mtn., a colorful ribbon tied to a low branch off the trail caught my attention. A closer look revealed a second ribbon even further into the underbrush. Without a clear path leading the way, curiosity and the pull of the unknown were irresistible and so I bent low and stepped off-trail. Small enough to easily step over, it was clear that the ribbons were marking the course of the small stream. With leaves crunching underfoot and the drone of Highway 18 still not penetrating this far into the forest, I didn't get far before deciding not to go further. Stopping to take in my surroundings, only the damp sheen off a bracket fungus mushroom stood out as unique among drooping branches and hearty moss of the forest.



Fall Chinook in Holder Creek

Then a sound out of cadence with and lower in tenor than those coming from the stream got my attention. The brush was thick, but the direction whence came the thumping sound was clear. Bending low to part branches, a clear view of the water revealed the startling, unexpected source: salmon! Later I learned that this seemingly far-too-big for the tiny stream was a female Chinook salmon. Pinching myself with wonder over this hoped for but unexpected encounter, I was stoked. More than 40 water

miles from the Ballard Locks near Puget Sound, and 10 miles upstream and 600 feet higher in elevation from the Issaquah Salmon hatchery, this timeless wonder of nature had me in its grasp and hasn't released me these nine months later.



Late season female and male Chinook salmon near the end of their run.

The presence of salmon like this were once commonplace in the lower reaches of the streams that flow off the Issaquah Alps, including Issaquah and Tibbets Creeks. But since the arrival of extraction industries and the wholesale disruption of the land and waterways, well, you know the story. Salmon and their freshwater habitat have declined significantly, as have many open and wild places. The Issaquah Alps Trails Club was formed precisely to stem that tide and make land and waterway conservation a priority.

A Strong History of Funding Conservation

The residents of King County have supported public funding for the preservation of land for over 50 years. Starting with the Forward Thrust program in 1968, to the Open Space bond measure in 1989, to the multiple tax levies in the 2000's, all of these measures raised money for parks, trails, riparian habitat, and open spaces.

In 1982, the King County Council launched the Conservation Futures program. Since then these funds have been a critical tool in preserving many miles of Issaquah Creek and its tributaries, including Holder Creek. A partial list of properties in the Issaquah Creek watershed that have been preserved includes: Confluence Park in Issaquah, The Issaquah Creek Natural Area south of town, plus the Squak/Tiger Corridor, Log Cabin Reach Natural Area, the Middle Issaquah Creek Natural Area, and the Taylor Mountain Forest. Away from Issaquah Creek, the lands of Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park, the Cougar/Squak Corridor, and the former Bergsma property in Issaquah are just some of the other notable acquisitions. In total, Conservation Futures has helped preserve more than 100,000 acres of land in King County, much of it in and around the Issaquah Alps. And the need continues. A number of land conservation initiatives currently supported by IATC are strong candidates to receive Conservation Futures funds.

An Adjustment is Needed

Proposition 1 seeks to extend the Conservation Futures funding by raising a portion of property tax rates. Washington State has some strict laws that govern the increase in property taxes, and these laws keep the Conservation Futures program from growing at a rate that matches the increasing cost of land in King County. If nothing is done or if Proposition 1 is rejected by the voters, then the ability to preserve land will further erode. If it is the will of the people, Proposition 1 will bring the rate to a place where the priority task of preserving critical lands can continue in our growing region.

The supporters of IATC do so so that we can continue our work to preserve and protect the land of the Issaquah Alps. We seek to know the land and the local issues as well as, and even better than the land owners and the jurisdictions that govern them. We identify issues and opportunities, we convene and influence the relevant parties, and we keep our followers in the know so that they speak out and show up when the situation demands it. But at the end of the day the money needs to be there to close the deal. We live in a unique place in our country, and indeed in the world. We have healthy wildlife habitat and healing salmon streams within a thriving and growing metropolitan area. Proposition 1 seeks to rise to the challenges brought on by that fact.

The IATC Board of Directors will be considering an endorsement of Proposition 1 at its September Board meeting. In Part 2 of this series, we will report on the results of that vote and hear from people from in and around the Issaquah Alps regarding their sentiments about the initiative and what it seeks to accomplish.

The Hiker's Hut Backstory

Tom Anderson - August 27, 2022

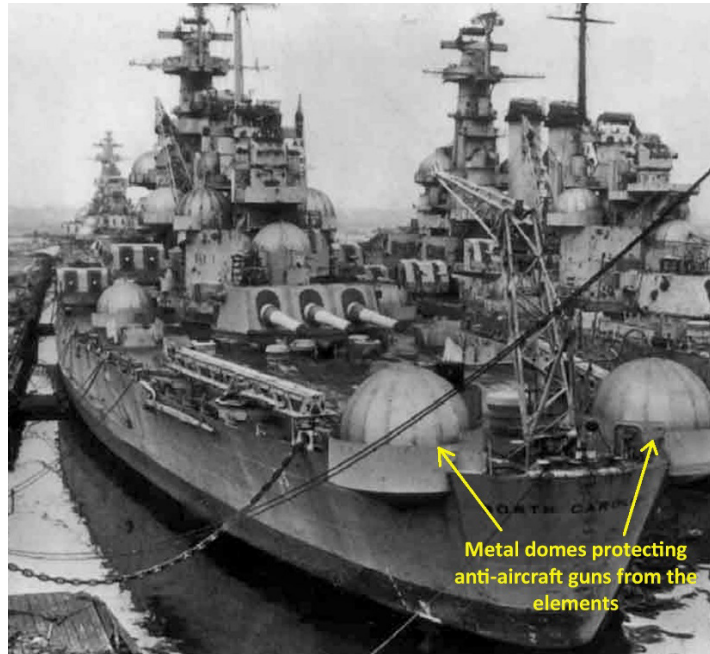
Trail shelters for the benefit of hikers are common enough, but seldom do you find one as protective as the welded metal "igloo" near the summit of West Tiger #1. But why is this "Hiker's Hut" such an impenetrable fortress? Well, some clues to its former life are readily apparent - two unused antenna masts right next to the dome and a major antenna farm a short distance away.



The West Tiger Mountain Hiker's Hut (2017). Photo by Tom Anderson.

The local lore is that this particular enclosure housed a radio repeater station operated by a small commercial enterprise serving radio dispatch communications in the Seattle metropolitan area, and when it ceased to be used for that purpose, it was (eventually) repurposed as the Hiker's Hut (sometime in the 1980s).

But what's the origin story of such a peculiar shelter? It looks like it has an interesting past prior to its life as a radio equipment enclosure. Indeed, its first role was to protect guns on the decks of navy ships being mothballed post World War II. After the war, the US Navy found itself with more ships than it needed but wanted to store them for future use in case the need arose (human proclivities being such as they are). The process was referred to as "mothballing," and for deck-mounted equipment like anti-aircraft guns, these little domes were invented. Here is an example of these domes in use on a mothballed US Navy ship:



Hundreds of ships were mothballed in the post-WWII era. A few were reactivated, but most awaited their eventual demise in the scrapyard during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The salvage companies that performed that work would sell what they could, where they could. Metallic items were generally sold for their melt value, but salvagers found a market for the domes in the radio industry as mountain-top equipment shelters. The "Hiker's Hut" is one such instance and has at least three siblings on West Tiger #1 alone. Here is a photo of one still in use by AccelNet Inc. on the east end of the West Tiger #1 antenna complex:



*Another domed hut on West Tiger Mountain still in use as a radio equipment shelter.
Photo by Tom Anderson.*

Maybe someday it will be turned into a bed-and-breakfast!

You can learn more about these little domes and the history of the mothballing of the post-WWII US Navy fleet here:

<https://wwiiafterwwii.wordpress.com/2016/03/27/mothballing-the-us-navy-after-wwii-pt-2/>



Welcoming Fair at the Issaquah Community Center, Friday, Sept. 9th.

Stop by the IATC table to say hi and learn how you can get involved in our hiking, restoration, and advocacy work. From 5:00 to 8:00 PM.

Salmon Days Oct. 1st and 2nd.

The region's iconic fall celebration of the return of salmon to the Issaquah Salmon Hatchery. Stop by our booth and say hi. Daily from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM.



East Cougar Mtn. Full Moon Rise Hike

Fri., Sept. 9 from 6:00 – 8:00 PM

Hike local trails and learn the story of east Cougar Mtn. and how the Talus "urban village" coexists within a landscape of forest and wildlife habitat.



West Tiger 3 Run

Tues., Sept 13 from 6:-00 – 8:00 PM

Join us for a run to see the view from West Tiger 3! We'll start jogging up the Nook trail and power hike up the Section Line trail to the top and its tremendous view.



Fall Equinox Hike on Squak Mtn.

Thurs., Sept. 22 from 5:00 – 7:00 PM

Let's get outside and hike from summer into fall on the equinox and visit Debbie's View, the best view on Squak Mtn.



Photo credit: Louise Kornreich

Teddy Bear Hike – Pretzel Tree Trail on Squak Mtn.

Sun., Sept 25 from 10:00 – 11:00 AM

Storyboards along this trail tell the story of Field Mouse as he meets the creatures of the forest as he seeks to find the Pretzel Tree.



The Apparatus

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