



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 2023

News – Events – Hikes



Become a community scientist with Dr. Joey Hulbert and IATC!

Nicole Assumpcao - June 2, 2023

Are you or is someone in your household a budding scientist? Or perhaps just an avid hiker with an interest in keeping our local forests healthy? Would you like to help scientists better serve our beloved foliage? Then we have the program for you!



IATC is excited to welcome Dr. Joey Hulbert for two events this month: a [webinar](#) on June 20th and a [guided forest health walk](#) on June 23rd. Dr. Hulbert specializes in forest pathology and public engagement in science and has helped coordinate some incredible methods for citizen science as the program director for [Forest Health Watch](#). The Forest Health Watch is a program to engage Pacific Northwest communities in tree health research and learning.



Forest Health Watch's pilot project is focused on Western Red Cedar dieback, with a necessity for both [visual observations](#) and local [soil samples](#). By becoming a "citizen scientist" you can help advance scientific knowledge and devise solutions to forest health issues. Dr. Hulbert's webinar will cover some of the findings to-date and demonstrate the utility of community scientists, while the guided walk will be a hands-on exploration of indicators of forest health culminating in collection of soil samples. To join the [webinar](#) or [walk](#), please register at the provided links. Feel free to collect and bring extra soil samples with you! If you can't join us, feel free to collect samples or observations on your own time and submit them using the instructions [here](#).



You can find more information about Dr. Hulbert and his work, including detailed instructions on how to [collect soil samples](#), on the [Forest Health Watch website](#).

Procrastination or eco-gardening? What I learned about doing more for the environment by doing less in your yard

Melanie Dunn - June 2, 2023

I moved to Issaquah last year, and with the move into a new house, I found myself responsible for a half-acre yard that I did not feel prepared to handle.

As an illustration - over the prior few years I'd had a patio and about 100 square feet of grass to maintain. When leaves fell on the patio the first year, I left them there. I didn't see a problem, so the next year I did the same. And then the next year. After 4 years, the decomposed leaves had become a layer of slime on the wood so slippery that half the deck was a slip-and-fall danger zone. Naturally, I solved this by never again using that half of the deck.

So I was intimidated - to say the least - to take on a much larger yard. And when I found myself getting mailing adverts every few weeks for yardwork services, the list of what I presumably needed to be doing only seemed to grow: seeding, thatching, aerating, fertilizing, mowing, edging, trimming, weeding, removing debris, leaf blowing, tree maintenance, and blackberry & ivy removal.

Then, as spring came this year, I stumbled upon some recommendations that doing less in the yard could be more than procrastination - it could be a positive move for the environment. Too good to be true? I'll let you judge for yourself.

Take this for what it is: a novice's summary of what a variety of sources have to say about the "yardwork to-do list." I've linked the experts where they can say it far better than I can.

Mowing the lawn

A typical landscaper or home & garden blog will say: mow your lawn once a week during growing season and every two weeks when it isn't growing season. These sources give the same advice that I ignore from my hairdresser twice a year: do frequent light trims to keep the grass uniform and healthy.

However, recent movements have asked: what if we don't? Mowing the lawn less saves on the consumption of water, fertilizer, and gas to power the mower. And best of all, the grass that grows long becomes food that fills your yard with pollinators - bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds - who have been decreasing in population in the past decades due to disease and pesticide use.

If you don't have an HOA or governmental authority to set rules about your lawn height, it may be a stylistic choice. I love the story of Horticulturist Kelly Norris, who [treats his yard as a prairie](#).

If you do have regulations to abide by, you still may be able to help attract the pollinators with just a bit less mowing. Paul Koch, an associate professor and turf grass extension specialist at the University of Wisconsin, explains that "Just raising your mowing height to four or four-and-a-half inches really keeps the majority of flowering plants intact."

Raking the leaves

I grew up raking the leaves into a pile to be picked up with the yard waste. (And to be fair, one of the best parts of fall is jumping into that leaf pile!)

But the latest recommendation from many organizations is actually not to rake leaves. "Leaf litter" as it is called, will ultimately break down in the yard without causing any harm. It feeds the growth of grass and plants, keeps the moisture in the soil, and even acts as food and shelter for insects which in turn become food for birds and the rest of the food chain.

If the leaves cover around half of the yard, most sources recommend to run them over with the mower to chop them into smaller pieces that will break down faster. If leaves fall so thickly that they entirely cover the grass, it is recommended to remove around half of them to get back to that half coverage level - the half that are removed can still be chopped up by a mower and used as mulch.

(With the money I save not buying a lawnmower - maybe I'll buy a trampoline for my fall jumping needs.)

What to plant

Plant natives! Native plants are already adapted to our local climate and as a result, they require less of everything: less water, fertilizer, pesticides, and less of your time. I'll point you to the experts:

- The University of Washington has an [excellent guide on planting natives](#)
- The [Washington Native Plant Society](#) has guidance on gardening with natives, identifying and removing invasives, and everything in between

So what will I actually do in my yard?

Although I won't be mowing, raking, fertilizing, or using pesticides - and I even found justification not to clear out dead vegetation from my yard (because birds use it to build nests!) - unfortunately the research that I did couldn't get me out of all the yard work. Here are the things I'm still stuck with:

- **Fighting the invasives** - I have a ton of blackberries and English Ivy to reckon with - yikes.
- **Trimming the hedge** - It has grown about 2 feet this spring, so if I wait much longer it will be taller than my ladder can reach!
- **Trimming the trees** - Any limbs that threaten the power lines or the roof of the house need to go.
- **Help expand the habitat** - (Okay this one is pure fun) Putting out birdhouses, bat houses, and shallow dishes of water for insects and birds during the hot parts of summer will all help bring critters that will be the highlight of my yard-watching and keep the backyard ecosystem going. Read more [here](#) about making your yard a wildlife habitat



A Pacific Rhododendron in bloom this May - native to the PNW



A Japanese Maple. Not so native, these plants stem from Japan but are well suited to Seattle due to the climate similarities to Japan. Currently being overrun by an invasive of some sort.



My backyard "prairie"

Trust Land Transfer Program receives funding and revitalization in time to consider West Tiger Mountain

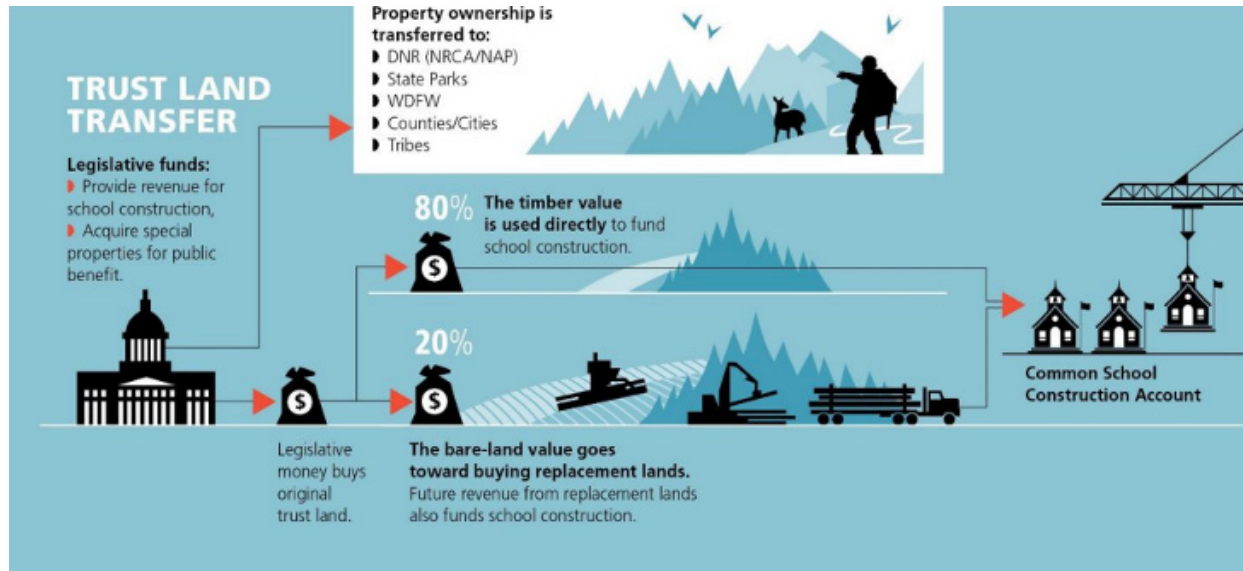
Alex Machetanz - June 2, 2023

On May 9, 2023, Governor Jay Inslee signed [HB 1460](#), which addresses the Washington state Department of Natural Resources's (DNR) land transactions, including the Trust Land Transfer Program. The Trust Land Transfer tool will now receive its highest level of funding in the past decade.

[Trust Land Transfer](#) (TLT) is a tool employed by DNR, which manages more than three million acres of state forest and rangeland. DNR has a dual mandate, and the land it manages must serve two purposes: 1. Generating revenue, and 2. Protecting wild spaces for conservation and recreation. TLT was established by the state of Washington in 1989 and provides a pathway for certain lands to serve solely the second purpose. In other words, those lands are protected for recreation, education, wildlife, and conservation.

When land is assessed for TLT, DNR looks at a number of variables, including revenue-generation performance, conservation value, and recreational potential. If DNR determines that the public and environmental benefits outweigh the state revenue-generation benefits, it can transfer that parcel of land to its Natural Areas Program, a Tribe, or another public agency. DNR will then purchase a new

parcel of land to account for the lost revenue.



Source: https://www.dnr.wa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/lm_tftp_legrep_draft.pdf

It is important to note that the revenue-generation mandate for DNR's public lands funds a variety of important programs, like building schools, universities, libraries, fire stations, and other public institutions, as well as funding local services across the state of Washington. Traditionally, that revenue is generated through logging. This helps account for WA's logging dominance, as our state exports [25% of the nation's](#) lumber products. However, DNR has explored other revenue-generation solutions in recent years, including carbon capture programs.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the Trust Land Transfer program. Since its inception, it has preserved recreational spaces that are well-known to most Washingtonians, including Mt. Si, West Tiger Mountain, Oyster Dome, Mailbox Peak, Blanchard Mountain, and Deception Pass State Park.



Oyster Dome: Preserved by the Trust Land Transfer Program

Part of HB 1460 allocated \$19.57 million (of the \$25.6 million DNR requested) to DNR to fund six projects across the state, accounting for 5,225 acres of land for recreation and conservation. Of those six parcels, DNR will review one in the Issaquah Alps area: [West Tiger Mountain](#). If accepted, the DNR Natural Areas program would preserve 99 acres of West Tiger Mountain solely for recreational use. In

addition to having high recreational value, the 99 acres of West Tiger Mountain also bears 120-year-old trees and Soderman Creek, a salmon-bearing stream.



West Tiger Mountain: Peak 3

The Issaquah Alps Trail Club collaborated closely with [Mountain to Sound Greenway](#) to advocate for the passage of HB 1460. In early January 2023, IATC leadership [traveled to Olympia](#) to meet with legislators and advocate for the bill's passage. While in Olympia, IATC and Mountain to Sound leadership met with legislators from Washington's 5th district, which includes the Tiger Mountain parcel currently under consideration. They also met with Senator Christina Rolfes of Bainbridge Island to thank her for her sponsorship of the bill in the Senate. Due to IATC's public-facing advocacy efforts, 591 supporters signed "Pro" to support TLT. This stands in stark contrast to the 10 "Con" votes. Thanks to IATC, Mountain to Sound Greenway, or our partners' and supporters' efforts, TLT is fully funded, revitalized, and considering important conservation impacts in our own backyard. You can read more about the [Trust Land Transfer program on DNR's website](#). IATC looks forward to working with our land management agencies to use Trust Land Transfer to place more land in the Issaquah Alps area into conservation status.



West Tiger Mountain: Recreational trails

Written for The Alpiner by Alex Machetanz

"Save Coal Creek" Fundraiser Recap

Tom Anderson - May 26, 2023



"UPSTREAM DOWNSTREAM" Fundraiser for Save Coal Creek

HAVE A LITTLE FUN, ENJOY THE MUSIC, AND MAKE NEW FRIENDS!

MEET OTHERS WHO SHARE YOUR PASSION TO PRESERVE THESE LAST OPEN SPACES, HEAR THE LATEST ON THE SAVE COAL CREEK EFFORT, AND LEARN WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

When: Sunday, May 21, 2023, 2 - 4 PM

Where: Newport Yacht Club, 81 Skagit Key, Bellevue

Some 40+ supporters of the Save Coal Creek advocacy effort gathered at the Newport Yacht Club on May 21 to contribute to the fund as well as munch, enjoy music, and frolic with Mr. Sasquatch. The speakers gave an update on the project's status, the strategy moving forward, and offered reflections on the area's history. Speakers included:

- Paul Winterstein
- Paul Nichol
- Sally Lawrence
- Anne Newcomb
- John Stokes
- David Kappler
- Steve Williams

The Coal Creek Jazz Band entertained the crowd, a nine-piece ensemble that energized the room with lively numbers such as "The Saints Go Marching In." Check them out [here](#).

Here is a little photo montage capturing the spirit of the event:



Attendees enjoyed some social time on the deck of the Newport Yacht Club.



Emcee Paul Winterstein kicked off the presentation with a summary of the geography.



IATC President Anne Newcomb reflected on the advocacy efforts of the club over the years.



Sally Lawrence, chair of the Save Coal Creek steering committee, reviewed the status of the project.



Save Coal Creek supporter, Newport Yacht Club member, and event organizer Paul Nichol offered thoughts on the state of the project.



John Stokes, City of Bellevue council member, reviewed the status of the project.



David Kappler, Save Coal Creek steering committee member, former IATC president, current IATC VP, etc., reminisced about his childhood remembrances of the Coal Creek area.



Steve Williams, former manager of the Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park and former president of the IATC, reflected on history.



Milt Swanson, a former resident of the project property, was present in spirit and in a video captured in 1995.



Supporters enjoyed refreshments while the program commenced.



The Coal Creek Jazz Band kept the room hopping.



Marika Bell (on the right) and IATC president Anne Newcomb enjoyed the company of a local, friendly sasquatch, who had some things to say.

IATC welcomes Nicole Assumpcao as our new Executive Director!

Anne Newcomb - June 4, 2023

After connecting with over 14 applicants and interviewing 8 stellar candidates, the IATC hiring committee is happy to welcome Nicole Assumpcao as our new Executive Director!



Nicole is an avid trail runner, enjoys baking, traveling, exploring nature and is a big dog lover. After graduate school she returned to live with her parents, who had moved to Issaquah, where she connected deeply with the Issaquah Alps. Nicole recently joined the IATC Communications Committee and along with Quinlyn Mullaney and has been volunteering as Editor. Nicole has also helped out at restoration events and volunteered her time to help create a very successful GiveBig campaign.

Born in Brazil, Nicole is a native Portuguese speaker. She also speaks Spanish and is learning Chinese. Considering how much fun Nicole is to visit with it is only fitting she can converse in many languages!



Nicole has had a very interesting work and study history including:

- 2013- Studied abroad in El Salvador with focus on social justice and outreach to marginalized communities
- 2015- Global Health Field Placement Award received to undertake water quality research in peri-urban communities surrounding Iquitos, Peru
- 2017- Outdoors for All adaptive recreation day camp counselor.
- 2019-2023 UW Research Project Coordinator for the International Centers of Excellence in Malaria Research both domestically and in India



We look forward to working with Nicole to continue our important mission of engaging the public to preserve, protect, and promote the land, wildlife, and trails of the Issaquah Alps for present and future generations.

Events



Restoration of High School Trail

Saturday, June 17 from 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Join IATC and Green Issaquah as we continue our restoration of the High School Trail, a well-loved section of Tiger Mountain.



Forest Health Watch Soil Sample Update (Virtual)

Tuesday, June 20 from 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Join IATC and Joey Hulbert, PhD from the Forest Health Watch in this virtual event to review the results of soil samples studied from previous collections on Tiger and Squak Mountains.





Forest Health Hike – E. Sunset Way

Thursday, June 15 from 4:00 PM – 6:30 PM

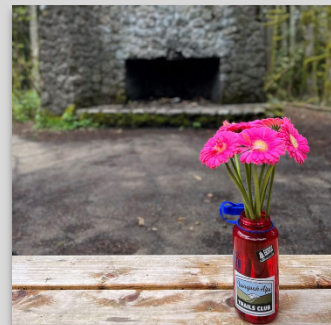
Join the IATC and Dan Hintz from City of Issaquah for an afternoon of plant identification and forest ecology education.



Intermediate Hike - Bullitt Fireplace from Mountainside Drive

Sunday, June 18 from 9:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Join James Li, IATC Board Member, on a fun, intermediate hike to Bullitt Fireplace on Squak Mountain.



Teddy Bear Hike – Swamp Trail

Thursday, June 22 from 10:30 AM – 12:30 PM

This family-friendly hike along the Swamp Trail is meant for the young at heart. Starting at High Point Trailhead, kids will hear the story of Zoey and the Swamp Monster while exploring the beautiful forest and wetlands of Tiger Mountain.



Forest Health Watch Walk & Soils Sampling

Friday, June 23 from 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Join IATC and Joey Hulbert, PhD from the Forest Health Watch for an informational afternoon walk along Pickering Trail followed by soils sample gathering at Emily Darst Park.



Forest Preservation – Why It is Important to View Trees as Assets

Saturday, June 24 from 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Join the IATC and the City of Issaquah on a hike through Cougar Mtn to see how climate change impacts the Issaquah Alps and what community leaders have done to preserve this vital region.



Hike Series: Big Trees of the Issaquah Alps

Tuesday, June 27 from 5:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Join Paul Winterstein for the first in a series of hikes to learn about Big Trees, starting with an isolated Douglas Fir on Squak Mtn. Future dates/locations TBD.



Geology of the Alps: Underfoot at Red Town on Cougar Mountain

Saturday, July 8 from 7:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Dig into the geology near the Red Town Trailhead on Cougar Mountain by joining geologist Tom Doe for this 3-mile exploratory hike.



Challenging Hike - West Tiger Cable Line Trail

Saturday, July 8 from 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Join Alex Galeana, IATC's newest Board Member, on a fun, challenging hike to West Tiger 3, via the Cable Line and West Tiger 3 Trails.



The Apparatus

Club Founder

Harvey Manning

Executive Director

Nicole Assumpcao (exec@issaquahalps.org)

President

Anne Newcomb (president@issaquahalps.org)

Vice President

Kelly Jiang

Vice President of Advocacy

David Kappler (advocacy@issaquahalps.org)

Program and Volunteer Coordinator

Kim Ngo

Board of Directors

David Dunphy

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Ryan McIrvin

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Alex Galeana

Stephanie Berry

Issaquah Alps Trails Club

P.O. Box 688

Issaquah, WA 98027

844-392-4282

Email: contact@issaquahalps.org

www.issaquahalps.org



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