



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 2023

News – Events – Hikes



BREAKING NEWS: Major steps in the fight to Save Coal Creek!

IATC Staff - August 3, 2023



Sharing some great news , which couldn't have happened without your incredible support! This week, King County announced that it plans to award the City of Bellevue a Conservation Futures grant of \$9.2M to support the Cougar Mountain Connections Project, which would acquire private lands both east and west of Lakemont Boulevard in south Bellevue to add to existing parks and improve connections in the regional trail system. The private lands proposed for acquisition include the historic Milt Swanson coal miner homestead, the long-desired goal of Save Coal Creek. The full release from the county can be found below.

Next Step: Bellevue will need to approve a 25 percent funding match. Please reach out as soon as possible to City Council members, thanking them for the city's support so far and urging them to make this acquisition happen. [Email council@bellevuewa.gov](mailto:council@bellevuewa.gov). And please enthusiastically thank County Councilmembers Reagan Dunn and Claudia Balducci for their support!

Urgent: Your donations have powered us to this amazing moment, but we still have a critical need for funds to finish out this fight. Dig deep and help out by [donating here](#).

With our thanks and appreciation,

Save Coal Creek's Steering Committee



RELEASE FROM KING COUNTY COUNCIL

CONTACT: [Daniel DeMay](#), 206-265-9197

Dunn, Balducci announce Conservation Futures grant for Bellevue's Cougar Mountain Connection project

King County Councilmembers Reagan Dunn and Claudia Balducci on Monday announced that King County is awarding \$9,247,500 to the City of Bellevue to support its Cougar Mountain Connections project, which aims to acquire and conserve 18 acres of land adjacent to the Coal Creek Natural Area.

"The Cougar Mountain Connections project is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to conserve our green space, fill in a critical wildlife corridor, and preserve local history while also adding more trails to one of our region's most popular hiking destinations," Dunn said. "I am proud to support this effort. Thank you to Save Coal Creek for highlighting the need to conserve these lands for generations to come and to the City of Bellevue for working to make this project a reality."

In April, Dunn and Balducci authored a joint letter to the Conservation Futures Advisory Committee to express their support for the project.

"I am thrilled that King County is stepping up to support the preservation of this unique property in partnership with the City of Bellevue," Balducci said. "The public advocacy for saving the Swanson property has been unequivocal and inspiring, showing how deeply our community cares about conservation of natural environment, safety for trail users and preservation of our region's history. I'm glad to be part of this effort for the benefit of our residents and our environment."

Funded through the King County Conservation Futures Tax Levy, the Cougar Mountain Connections project seeks to fill the gaps between trail segments and private properties. The project would make trail connections in the Lakemont trail system, Lakemont and Lewis Creek Community Parks, and to over 35 miles of trails in Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park. It would also allow the City of

Bellevue to expand capacity of the Red Town trailhead and provide parking for local hikers. In addition to these trail benefits, the project would conserve the full wildlife corridor and existing woodlands for public use.

"Thank you to King County for the significant Conservation Futures contribution," Bellevue Mayor Lynne Robinson said. "We are always looking to bolster our image as a 'city in a park,' and we also wish to preserve our mining heritage where we can. This generous funding could make it possible to do both. Thank you to Save Coal Creek too for raising awareness about this opportunity."

Several private properties along Lakemont Boulevard SE are entirely surrounded by public open space, lying between the Coal Creek Natural Area and Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park. Two of these properties are currently under review for a controversial single family home development of up to 35 units, making them the most urgent parcels to conserve. In addition, one of the parcels slated for potential development contains the former home of Milt Swanson, one of the last Newcastle coal miners, meaning that if the City of Bellevue can acquire the property, it would also conserve an important piece of our region's coal mining heritage.

The idea to acquire the property for public benefit was led by the citizen group [Save Coal Creek](#), which has led the charge to conserve these parcels of land.

"Save Coal Creek is grateful to Councilmembers Dunn and Balducci and Bellevue Mayor Lynne Robinson for supporting the effort to preserve this land and to City of Bellevue leaders who recognized the significance of these parcels," said Sally Lawrence, chair of the Save Coal Creek steering committee. "With the imminent conclusion of the permit process for the parcels, now is the time to complete their acquisition. We are hopeful that city and county will work successfully with the landowners to add these important parcels to Coal Creek Natural Area that will benefit the public for generations."

King County's Conservation Futures program that seeks to preserve natural lands and urban green spaces in King County. For more information, [visit the King County Conservation Futures website.](#)

Diversity in the Outdoors - Alex Galeana's story

Alex Galeana - August 3, 2023

My friends and I had been scrambling all day near a small town in the Rockies. As dusk fell, we wandered into a local restaurant, covered in sweat and dirt, telling stories about the day's triumphs and near misses. The bartender seemed chatty with the rest of my group, but his eyes seemed to slide away whenever I tried to get a beer. When I finally waved him down, he completely ignored me.

As we left town, my friends gushed about how charming the place was. It was almost like they'd experienced a totally different place than I had. Sore, satisfied, and exhausted from the day, my body was full of positive endorphins, but a part of me was also relieved to be heading back to the city - where people wouldn't give me the kind of look that says, "You don't belong here."

As a Latino outdoors enthusiast, across outdoor spaces throughout the West, experiences like this are just a part of my reality. And while they're usually only small points of discomfort on my adventures, these instances add up. Once, as I stood alone outside a bar in a rural mountain town getting some air, a police officer came up to me and began asking me pointed questions: "What are you doing in town? What are your plans?" Of course, there had been no questions when I'd been walking around with some of my other mountain friends.



Photo courtesy of Alex Galeana

I am not alone in the conflict between my love for the outdoors and feeling out of place in the outdoor recreation community. There are many other climbers, runners, and outdoor enthusiasts of color who

also feel like the outdoor community wasn't designed for them.

The US has a history of discrimination against people of color in outdoor spaces that comes much closer to the present than we might think. In fact, it was less than sixty years ago that the Civil Right Act of 1964 made it law for Black Americans to have full access to public lands such as national parks, [which had previously often been segregated](#).

In the present day, the legacy of discrimination lingers in a distinct lack of diversity and inclusion. According to the [National Health Foundation](#), which aggregated data from U.S. organizations such as the Forest Service and National Park Service, while people of color comprise almost 40% of the U.S. population, they make up only 30% of visitors to national public lands. The statistics become more dismal when you zero in on specific groups. [Researchers compiled National Parks Service data in 2018](#) and found that while Black people make up 13% of the U.S. population, less than 2% of visitors to national parks are Black. Asian (5% of the population) and Latino (19% of the population) visitors both come in at less than 5% of park visitations.

My own personal journey in the outdoors has mirrored these data points. My experience with outdoor recreation started when I was eight, when I'd just immigrated to the United States and joined the Boy Scouts. Even at that age, I recognized it as the most direct way I could connect to this country and feel American. Language and cultural barriers meant that for many years I felt alienated from other kids at school and in public. Having access to the outdoors gave me a safer place where dealing with those emotions was more manageable.

Outdoor recreation became even more important to me after I graduated high school. It was then that my parents told me that I was undocumented. My family had left Mexico when I was eight in a rush to escape the dangerous living conditions we'd experienced there. Just as I had when I was a child, I turned to the outdoors in order to process my emotions. Hiking and camping in unfamiliar forests and peaks gave me space to take care of my body and feel a grounding connection to the wilderness-safe and peaceful in a way human society could never be, but at the same time savage, unpredictable, and existentially spicy.

Even after I worked through that period of emotional upheaval, the outdoors has become an important part of my life for fun, recreation, and connection. By now, I've participated in many amazing couloir climbs, alpine scrambles, and trail runs. However, as I got deeper into outdoor recreation communities, it hit harder how few people in these spaces looked like me.



Photo by Michael Black from the top of Cable Line, one of Alex Galeana's favorite Issaquah Alps jaunts

While I've made great friends in the climbing and trail running communities, I've always felt like an outsider-as if these communities weren't designed for people like me. I've had to fight against the feeling of isolation that comes from being the only person who looks like me on the trail. And as much as I love my mountain friends and training partners, they can't relate to many of the issues my community is facing.

Take a look at [Texas District Court's pending ruling on DACA](#) (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), slated for this year or the next. As a result of the ongoing case, thousands of young immigrant adults, including myself and many of my friends and family, may lose their ability to live and work in the United States. Many in the mountaineering community, busy planning their next career moves, renovating a van to move into, or scheming how to pull off a month-long trip to Patagonia, will never know what it's like to worry that their entire life plan might become illegal in an instant.

When you consider that it is the norm to be the odd one out, to know there are things people probably don't want to talk about, to get confused or hostile looks on the trail or in nearby communities - it doesn't seem surprising that people of color aren't visiting the wilderness as much as white people are.

That's why it's critical that we in the outdoor recreation community work together to create a more inclusive atmosphere that is actually reflective of the people who live in our country. Not only must public lands be available and made easily accessible to marginalized communities, but people of color must be offered more opportunities to learn about what's out there - and a safe and welcoming atmosphere when we join in.

There are many direct ways to accomplish this. For one, conservation organizations can spearhead educational programs that teach BIPOC youth about our public lands and bring them to experience the wonder of these spaces through recreational activities like hiking, climbing, biking, etc. It is especially critical to center these opportunities around historically marginalized BIPOC youth from communities that have a difficult time accessing our public lands, whether because of financial hardship, lack of free time, or lack of awareness about the opportunities.

Another solution is for conservation organizations to hire BIPOC staff, not just at the program levels, but for decision-making and leadership positions. Doing this will ensure that any educational and advocacy programs focused on conservation efforts are designed through a lens that prioritizes the lived experience of people of color in Washington.

This is a concept that is very popular in the immigrant rights movement, a cause I've worked for at my day job for many years. When seeking to fill positions of leadership in this space, we find it a good practice to hire people who have been the most directly impacted by the issues we're trying to solve. In turn, leaders who have lived with the problem of a lack of diversity in outdoor spaces and felt its impact on their own families and communities are more likely to make political decisions that prioritize the needs and values of others who are affected.

Although these are issues that will take a long time for the outdoor community to tackle, I have hope that we're headed in the right direction. Our community in the Issaquah Alps is a great example of this. The Issaquah Alps Trails Club (IATC), an organization I sit on the board of, has made it an organizational priority in our five-year strategic plan to build an inclusive outdoors with a diverse community. This can be seen in the organization's recent recruitment efforts, which have focused on finding diverse board members and volunteers to join our organization. Issaquah's largest trail running club, the Issaquah Alps Trail Running Club, has implemented a similar practice. A high number of the club's members are trail runners of color - which is a result of the welcoming vibe and equity-driven outreach efforts of the club's leadership.

The outdoor recreation community has had an incredible impact on my life. In the mountains, I have found refuge, friendship, and adventure, and ultimately, being in the outdoors helped me find my place in a country I'm now happy to call home. My hope is that this community will put in the work it takes to give more people who look like me and come from similar backgrounds the best opportunity possible to discover these wonders for themselves.

Further Reading:

[Why Do Minorities Stay Away from National Parks?](#)

[The Deep Roots of Outdoor Recreation's Diversity Gap](#)



Gratuitous photo of ED Nicole Assumpcao's two dogs - Alex says they are his favorite thing on Strava

Help with King County's Updated Flood Plan

IATC Staff - August 3, 2023

Our beloved Pacific Northwest is known for its greenery in large part due to one major element: water! The snaking rivers and crystalline lakes that punctuate our treed landscape have been intricately linked to local lifestyles for many generations. As living entities, rivers change over time, and with the advent of climate change, there is an increased likelihood of local flooding. Because of this, King County is now undertaking a two-year process to update its Flood Management Plan, which was last updated in 2013.

Did you know more than 57,000 people in King County live in areas at high risk of flooding? Thousands more people work or commute every day near rivers, streams and shorelines that are at risk of flooding.

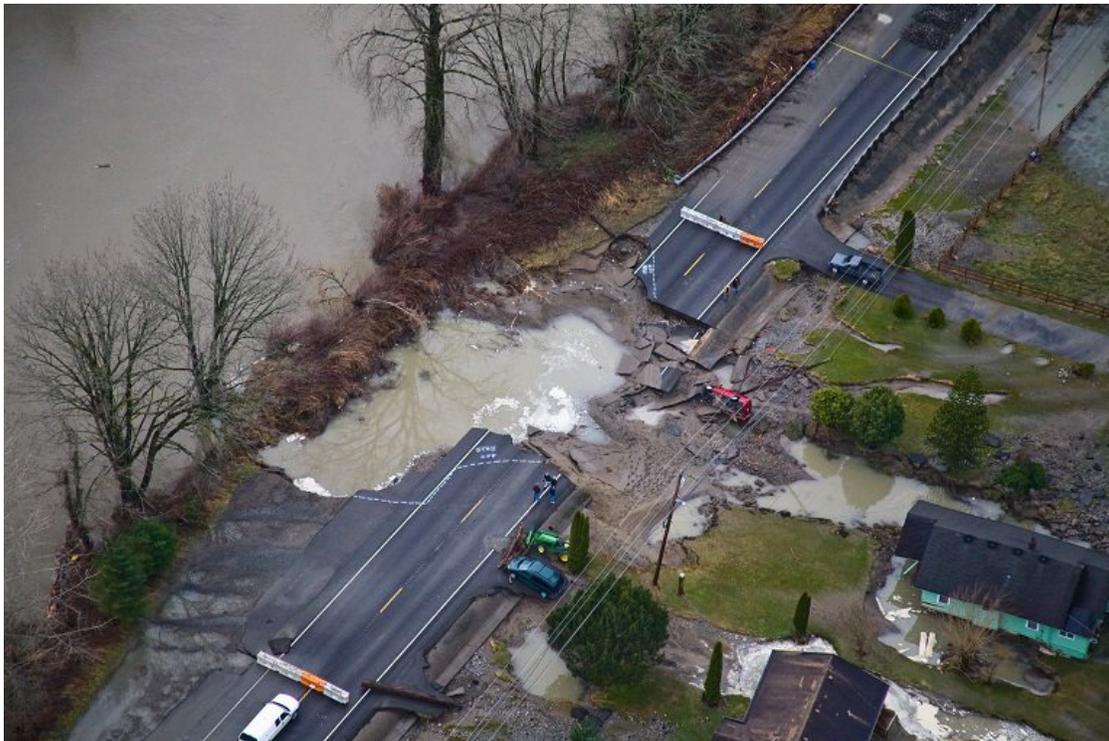


Image courtesy of King County

Your voice makes a difference in the next flood plan! Please help King County address the myriad of issues related to local flooding by filling out their [new survey](#) and share what actions would best help your community reduce flood risks or improve flood preparedness. You can also join IATC on a guided hike with King County staff Judy Blanco and Seth Oakes to discuss Holder Creek and the [King County conservation and floodplain management efforts in the Issaquah Basin](#) on August 26 - [register here](#).

For more information about the flood plan, visit kingcounty.gov/FloodPlan or contact Jason Wilkinson by [email](#) or by calling 206-477-4786.

Join City of Issaquah's Forest Steward Training!

IATC Staff - August 3, 2023



Forest Steward Orientation

Issaquah has over 1,500 acres of forested open spaces, encompassing about 20 percent of our city. Maintaining these beautiful and ecologically important areas takes a team of city employees and some amazing volunteers, like the dedicated team of Forest Stewards.

Working closely with Green Issaquah staff, Forest Stewards are provided training in plant identification, ecological restoration best practices, and how to safely lead their own small volunteer events as a part of the Green Issaquah team. This ongoing role makes a big impact within Green Issaquah and fosters a deeper connection and sense of pride for the forested parks of Issaquah!

If you are interested in joining the Green Issaquah team as a volunteer Forest Steward and leading your own projects and events at an "adopted" local park, come join us for orientation. We encourage all that are interested in taking on an ongoing volunteer role to attend. Orientation is free and open to the public.



Time: August 26th, 2023 from 9am-12pm

Location : View Room in the Community Center-- 301 Rainier Blvd S, Issaquah, WA 98027

What to expect: Mix of presentations and hands-on restoration activities

What to bring: Water Bottle, Snacks, Closed-Toed Shoes, and an Open Mind

[Link to register](#)

The Old Issaquah Waterworks

Tom Anderson - July 26, 2023

Did you know Lake Tradition has an inlet stream but no outlet stream? Where does all the water go? It finds a way out - underground. The water percolates through the earth and comes to the surface via various springs on the slope of the north side of the Tradition Plateau.

In the early days of the town, the public works department took advantage of this water resource by constructing a series of catchments, cisterns and pipes to provide water to the residents. If you know where to look, the system's remnants can still be seen. The most easily seen artifact is a pair of concrete cisterns a short distance from the I-90 exit 18 eastbound on-ramp. The photo below shows the cisterns, taken from the slope above, with the freeway in the background. They haven't been cleaned in a while!



Cisterns of the old Issaquah waterworks, with I-90 in the background. Photo by Tom Anderson.

The view from the on-ramp is more subtle, but the cistern's upper rim can be seen from the passenger side of a vehicle taking the on-ramp. (Dear driver - keep your eyes on the road).



The view of the cisterns from the i-90 on-ramp (Exit 18). Note: this photo was taken in the winter; it's a little harder to see through the foliage of summer. Photo by Tom Anderson.

If you are lucky enough to have an old copy of the "Guide to Trails of Tiger Mountain" by William K. Longwell Jr., there is a specific hike description for the "Waterworks Trail," which went by these cisterns and then skirted along the base of the Tradition Plateau eastward. Sadly, it was a very soggy and difficult-to-maintain trail, so it has been allowed to return to nature.

Back in the early years of the club, hikes to the waterworks were often on the IATC calendar. Here is a description from the 1985 Q1 Alpiner:

BIG TREE TRAIL AND ISSAQUAH WATERSHED LOOP (Class 2 + C)

From Big Tree Trail, another variation and favorite hike, on Lake Tradition Plateau, we drop down to the The Old Issaquah Waterworks, with its many cascading Creeks and return to our starting point.

As the town grew, more water was needed, prompting many system upgrades. Here is a 1937 Issaquah Press article about a project to add water storage capacity by building a tank not far from these cisterns.

More Storage For Our Water System

Council Decides to Proceed With
Construction of Last Unit Pro-
vided for Big Project.

The original blue prints of the plan adopted for our new municipal water system called for another settling tank to be constructed above the big circular cement tank. At the meeting of the City Council Monday evening it was decided to go ahead with that tank at once as there is still money in the special fund to take care of it. It will be of 30,000 gallon capacity and will provide that much additional storage for emergencies.

The decision was to build it within the large square settling tank, making it about half the size of that tank, which is partly cemented now.

The report of the treasurer gave the following balances in the different funds:

Current expense.....	\$2405.39
Special street.....	-579.77
Guaranty	383.63
Waterworks	1185.12
Waterworks bonds.....	2479.83
Special waterworks.....	1832.04
City Hall.....	694.63
L. I. D. No. 5.....	428.92

\$8829.92

They authorized the use of a horse in dragging the cement and gravel up to the springs for building catch basins, and to call for bids on the old, small fire truck chassis.

The Issaquah Press, November 4, 1937. (Courtesy the Issaquah History Museums.)

Ultimately, collecting drinking water from surface springs was discontinued in favor of deep wells - a more sanitary approach (still in use). The old waterworks system has been abandoned, but stands as a reminder of the water resources essential to life, and the role of the natural areas around the town that recharge the aquifer we still draw upon.



Events

Partner Event: Forest Steward Volunteer Orientation

Saturday, Aug. 26 from 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Become a volunteer Forest Steward with the City of Issaquah to lead your own Green Issaquah restoration party!



Partner Event: Summer Litter Pickup Party with FLSSP

Monday, Aug 28 from 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Join FLSSP, in partnership with Kids Coming Together and the Lake Sammamish Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership (UWRP), to help keep our local state park clean this summer!



Restoration of High School Trail

Saturday, Sep 23 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.



IATC Public Forum: Forest Carbon & Carbon Credits

Wednesday, Oct 25 from 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

SAVE THE DATE! Join IATC and our panel of experts from the City of Issaquah, King County, and City Forest Credits to learn more about forest carbon in the Issaquah Alps, and how carbon credits can be used to fund conservation.





Forest Stewardship: Learn about King County's Projects on Cougar Mountain

Saturday, Aug 12 from 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Join Paul Fischer of King County's Forestry Program on a walk through Cougar Mountain as he discusses upland forest health, climate resilience, and forest stewardship.



Plein Air Watercolor Hike

Thursday, Aug 17 from 5:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Join Kelly Jiang, IATC Board Member, on a special evening hike up to Cougar Mountain's Million Dollar View to capture Issaquah's beautiful nature via watercolor. Bring your paint supplies to enjoy an artistic break at the summit.



Learn about the Trust Land Transfer Program on Tiger Mountain - Dwight's Way Trail

Wednesday, Aug 23 from 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM

Join Alex Machetanz, an active member of IATC's Advocacy Committee, for an educational hike along Dwight's Way Trail on Tiger Mountain.



Big Trees of the North Tradition Plateau

Wednesday, Aug 23 from 5:00 PM – 7:30 PM

How big is the Ruth Kees Big Tree? Come along on this hike on the north side of the Lake Tradition Plateau where we will measure the big tree's circumference and calculate its diameter. Along the way, we will select other larger trees in the area and add their measurements to the database.



Holder Creek Interpretive Walk – Taylor Mountain

Saturday, Aug 26 from 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Join IATC on a walk led by Judy Blanco and Seth Oakes from the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks to learn about the ecology, wildlife, and the landscape of the Issaquah Basin.



Squak Ramble to Debbie's View

Saturday, Sep 2 from 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Join club stalwart Debbie Anschell on a hike to her namesake destination "Debbie's View" on Squak Mountain.



The Apparatus

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