

RAILSTO TRAILS

FALL 2019 FROM RAILS-TO-TRAILS CONSERVANCY

A New Frontier

Featuring some of the West's most stunning geography, Washington State's Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail is being dubbed America's next great adventure trail.



rails-to-trails
conservancy

Nancy Einwich

Hampshire, Illinois



Each issue we highlight a member or supporter of our national trail community. Special thanks to Nancy Einwich, a Trailblazer Society and Heritage Circle member, for supporting America's rail-trails!

What I do

I'm an accountant, currently part-time at Dukane Corporation in St. Charles, where I've been employed for over 35 years. Bicycling has become a lifeline in my senior years, keeping me healthy and fit. I have also trained golden retrievers for more than 40 years for competition and therapy work.

Favorite inspirational quote

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."
—Reinhold Niebuhr

Person I admire

Bill Gates—he had the vision to start a company from his garage and build it into an empire. He also started the Giving Pledge, which helps people worldwide.

Favorite rail-trail in Illinois

The Long Prairie Trail, which starts just outside of Capron and ends a little west of Caledonia. The trail has beautiful scenery, rolling Midwest countryside and a canopy of trees—refreshing on hot summer days! The town of Poplar Grove, midway, has a welcoming café where I love to relax and chat with the local folks.

Favorite rail-trail in the country

The Mickelson Trail in South Dakota. I have fond memories of riding it with a close friend in June 2015. We started in Deadwood, our bikes packed for a weeklong adventure, and rode the entire trail self-supported to its end in Edgemont. It's true beauty at every turn.

A meaningful life story

I've trained my golden retrievers for therapy work for decades; the dogs are natural for showing love to humans, but must be taught the right approach to be certified for therapy. I am just in awe at what they can do. We

do weekly visits to memory care facilities and libraries for the Read to Rover program; both children and the elderly benefit from these visits. To communicate with an animal and have them understand and respond is a gift.

My next big trail trip

The Virginia Capital Trail. It is packed full of history, which is one of my passions!

Why trails are important to communities

Rail-trails enable people to experience small towns—and enable communities to hold on to their history as the country changes. Some of the towns along bike trails are popular and thriving now because of the amenities they offer to the trail users—including restaurants, lodging and museums. Every town has a story to tell, and trails allow people to learn those stories different ways than roads and highways.

Why I support RTC and the Heritage Circle

I know and understand what it takes to keep improving and expanding America's rail-trails. This work must continue, but it can't without support—so I am happy to be a supporter of RTC. Rail-trails keep our history alive. •

FROM THE STAFF

Favorite Trail State?



Laura Stark
Staff Writer

My husband and I recently celebrated our 20th anniversary in Hawaii, and I'll never forget the reaction we received when we responded to questions about where we were from. Invariably, when we said "Colorado," the locals from this gorgeous paradise of sparkling oceans, tropical jungles and sandy beaches exclaimed, "Oh, I'd love to live there!"



The Centennial State truly lives up to its reputation as a destination for outdoor recreation. Since moving here a year ago, we've explored the Mineral Belt Trail, Coal Creek Trail, Longmont-to-Boulder Trail, Manitou Incline and countless others—each one incredibly scenic and a joy to experience. Trails are everywhere! Some are neighborhood connectors (my daughter bikes to school each day on the expansive Lake Link Trail), some are recreational adventures, and many do both. Trails are integrated into the lifestyle of Coloradans and it's simply magical. •

FEATURED LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Memories From Morges



I just wanted to let you know that I was in Switzerland last week and did the Historic Utopia tour in Morges that was [featured] in

your Winter 2019 edition. It was such a great experience. I literally tore out the article from the magazine and took it with me on my vacation. My wife and I enjoyed the town of Morges and loved sightseeing the castle and the quaint town. The article was very helpful and accurate. Thank you.

Bob Rimol, Londonderry, New Hampshire

Add your unique voice to the rail-trail movement by becoming a member of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. Learn more about us at railstotrails.org, or call 202.331.9696 for info.



COVER STORY

08

A New Frontier

Washington's Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail

Efforts in Washington are ramping up for the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail, a developing 200-miles-plus pathway that will showcase some of the West's most beautiful geography and railroad history while serving as an off-road recreation and transportation connector for nearly the entire length of the state.

By Gene Bisbee

14

Preserving an American Legacy: C&O Canal Towpath

Built along a transportation corridor that helped open up access between the Washington, D.C., area and the western United States, the C&O Canal Towpath is a historical embodiment of early America.

By Danielle Taylor

19

Keith Laughlin: Evolution of a Movement

2019 Doppelt Family Rail-Trail Champion Keith Laughlin reflects on the mass evolution of the rail-trail movement during his 18-year tenure as president of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.

By Amy Kapp

20

A View From ... Mississippi's Tanglefoot Trail

Get to know the exemplary qualities that helped make Mississippi's Tanglefoot Trail Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's 2019 inductee to the Rail-Trail Hall of Fame through this beautiful pictorial.

By Laura Stark

25

Destination Maine: Eastern Trail (Best of Coastal New England)

Experience the beauty of southern Maine's Eastern Trail, a popular destination connecting serene woods, sandy beaches and bustling waterfront areas along a 29-mile route from South Portland to Biddeford.

By Cindy Barks

DEPARTMENTS

Left // I Support Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Nancy Einwich (Illinois)

Left // From the Staff/Featured Letter to the Editor

02 // Point of View

03 // RTC Quarterly Report

04 // Emerging Rail-Trails California's Great Redwood Trail

06 // Best Of Long-Distance Rides on the Great American Rail-Trail

23 // Community Connections Ian Mackay: Where There's a Wheel, There's a Way (Washington)

24 // Trailside Illinois' Hennepin Canal Parkway

28 // Trail Tales Buckeye Biker Explores Ohio by Trail

Inside Back Cover // Featured Map Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail (Washington)

ON THE COVER: Casey McGrath (left) and Jill Lenington, both of Yakima, on the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail near Thorpe, Washington, with their horses Paige and Breeze
Photo by Gene Bisbee

WHEN TRAILS UNITE US

This past year—and especially since starting at Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) in February—I've spent much time on my hometown trail, the Patuxent Branch Trail in Maryland. The trail has long been a favorite place of mine, but my work at RTC has brought a new lens with which to experience and understand it.

On May 8, in the days leading up to the 150th anniversary of the completion of the trans-continental railroad, RTC launched the Great American Rail-Trail, embarking on a journey to complete the first multiuse trail across America that will be entirely separated from vehicle traffic. The enthusiasm the Great American has inspired is contagious. We've heard from thousands about their excitement for this vision, their ideas for how it can be fully connected and their passion for getting out on the trail ASAP. Even Al Roker, RTC member and Today Show host, can't wait to ride the Great American.



KATHY YOUNG, COURTESY RAILS-TO-TRAILS CONSERVANCY

Between Washington, D.C., and Washington State, epic infrastructure exists that forms the backbone of the Great American Rail-Trail—more than 1,900 miles of trails that already connect millions of people to incredible sites, experiences, nature and history.

The anchors on each end of the Great American, the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail in Washington (p. 8) and the C&O Canal National Historical Park in D.C. and Maryland (p. 14), are testaments to the nation's rich history—from the innovation and entrepreneurship that created the nation's canal system to the spirit of western exploration. Each trail is epic and iconic.

And while the Great American will connect the East and West, the planned Great Redwood Trail in California will stretch 316 miles north to south, from San Francisco Bay to Eureka, making it the longest rail-trail in California (p. 4). An emerging trail with outstanding potential, it will connect millions of people to the Great Redwoods, inspiring a new appreciation for the grandness of America's natural resources.

All of these trails, while powerful in their impact and intention, require political and public will to realize their full potential—from officially railbanking the Great Redwood Trail corridor to delivering the funding necessary in Washington and Maryland to close key gaps and protect and rehabilitate historic routes.

Nationwide, we're witnessing all that's possible with connected trail systems. They are powerful tools for economic investment and give all people the chance to be outdoors and choose active transportation. One such person is Ian Mackay in Washington. A lifelong bicycle advocate, trails were key to his recovery from a bicycle accident that left him with a spinal cord injury. Mackay strives for greater accessibility of multiuse trails for people living with disabilities (p. 23).

The work to build trails couldn't be more complex. Each project is exceptional and unique—and familiar. The Patuxent Branch Trail provides respite for my family as the country's trails do for millions of Americans. But realizing the full potential of these trails to connect people and places—to create new access to the outdoors, transportation, health and wellness—requires teamwork: all of us, together, advocating for the investments necessary to create a nation truly connected by trail.

Ryan Chao, President
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Rails to Trails is the magazine of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a nationwide network of trails from former rail lines and connecting corridors to build healthier places for healthier people.

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Brandi Horton 

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Amy Kapp 

LEAD WRITER AND EDITOR
Laura Stark 

EDITORS
Wendy Jordan, Sharon Congdon

DESIGN/PRODUCTION
Bussolati

RAILS-TO-TRAILS CONSERVANCY

HEADQUARTERS
2121 Ward Court, NW, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20037-1213
PHONE 202.331.9696
EMAIL magazine@railstotrails.org
WEBSITES railstotrails.org, TrailLink.com



FIELD AND REGIONAL OFFICES
MIDWEST Yellow Springs, OH 614.837.6782
midwest@railstotrails.org
NORTHEAST Philadelphia, PA 267.332.4267
northeast@railstotrails.org
WESTERN Oakland, CA 510.992.4662
western@railstotrails.org
FLORIDA Tallahassee, FL 866.202.9788
rtcflorida@railstotrails.org
TEXAS Brownsville, TX 956.338.1800
BALTIMORE Baltimore, MD 410.207.2445
MILWAUKEE Milwaukee, WI 414.688.4367



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Rails to Trails, 2121 Ward Court, NW, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20037-1213



Major Support Builds in Southeastern Wisconsin for Route of the Badger



RTC's 2019 Doppelt Fund Awards \$130,000+ to 10 U.S. Communities



RTC Legal Team Effort Protects Railbanking Negotiation Process



New Jersey Awards \$27 Million+ for Trail, Walking and Bicycling Projects



Senate EPW Committee Approves Federal Transportation Bill

What We've Been Up To

Major Support Builds in Southeastern Wisconsin for Route of the Badger

 In September, RTC and partners gathered with Wisconsin legislators at the state capitol for a briefing to discuss strategies for establishing political will and funding to connect trails in the southeastern part of the state.

In a major show of support, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) announced joining as a lead partner in the coalition for the 700-mile Route of the Badger, an RTC TrailNation™ project with potential to generate transformative benefits across Southeastern Wisconsin. Part of the SEWRPC VISION 2050 plan, the inclusive regional trail network is viewed as a driver of new opportunities in the region and statewide—for physical activity, tourism, recreation and economic growth. RTC and partners also discussed plans to move forward with an emerging legislative trails caucus that will help deliver the political will and support necessary to complete a statewide trail network. **Contact: Willie Karidis, willie@railstotrails.org.**

RTC's 2019 Doppelt Fund Awards \$130,000+ to 10 U.S. Communities

In May 2019, RTC awarded more than \$130,000 to help 10 communities strengthen and connect their trail systems and generate benefits for health,

active transportation and mobility, economic development, social equity and the environment. Ranging in size from \$5,000 to \$27,500, the awards support a variety of transformative projects related to maintenance, trail building and community engagement in Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Virginia and Washington State.

Established in 2015, the Doppelt Family Trail Development Fund supports trail projects that provide critical value yet are often not competitive for traditional public funding sources. RTC received over \$4.7 million in application requests in 2019, demonstrating the national reality of unmet trail funding needs. The 2019 grant program was bolstered by a \$20,000 gift from an anonymous donor. Learn more: railstotrails.org/doppeltfund. **Contact: Kelly Pack, kellyp@railstotrails.org.**

RTC Legal Team Effort Protects Railbanking Negotiation Process

In July 2019, RTC celebrated a win for railbanking when the Surface Transportation Board (STB) announced that it would issue extendable one-year trail-use negotiating periods for disused rail corridors during the railbanking process—which has been responsible for the development of thousands of miles of rail-trails since the 1980s.

The win is part of a larger effort to urge the STB to reject a rule proposed by opponents of railbanking to restrict negotiations to essentially three years except under “extraordinary circumstances.” Armed with the knowledge that negotiations often extend beyond this time period, RTC’s legal team submitted formal comments in opposition and mobilized trail supporters, who sent 160+ direct comments and nearly 15,000 petition signatures to the STB. The STB’s decision is expected by the end of summer 2019. **Contact: Liz Thorstensen, liz@railstotrails.org.**

New Jersey Awards \$27 Million+ for Trail, Walking and Bicycling Projects

 In May 2019, following intense advocacy by RTC and trail advocates in New Jersey, the state’s Department of Transportation (NJDOT) announced it had awarded more than \$27 million through its Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside and Safe Routes to School programs to improve walking and bicycling connectivity statewide.

Of note, more than \$3.6 million was awarded to six projects in the planned Circuit Trails network, which connects across 800+ miles in the Greater Philadelphia–Camden area. This includes \$1.22 million to construct a key segment of the Atlantic Avenue Trail, part of the larger Cross Camden County Trail, and \$175,000 for

the design and engineering of a 0.7-mile segment of the 10-mile Burlington-Camden Trail connecting Moorestown with the Delaware River Waterfront. The projects will open up new mobility options for thousands of people. **Contact: Liz Sewell, elizabeths@railstotrails.org.**

Senate EPW Committee Approves Federal Transportation Bill

And we're off and running! In July, Congress’ Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW) passed a bipartisan bill to reauthorize a part of the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act—following months of discussion and anticipation by RTC and the national trails community. The federal transportation bill would elevate safety for walkers and bicyclists and begin to address transportation-related causes of climate change; however, it misses the opportunity to provide much-needed strategic investments that would connect active transportation networks and spines across communities and entire regions.

RTC continues to monitor the progress of the transportation bill—and is mobilizing to urge Congress to pass transformative legislation that meets America’s diverse and evolving transportation needs. Learn more: railstotrails.org/trailstransform. **Contact: Kevin Mills, kevin@railstotrails.org.**

LEFT TO RIGHT: DAVID SCHLABOWSKIE; COURTESY MIDTOWN GREENWAYS COALITION; BARBARA RICHEY; LEAH GERBER; ISTOCK



PHOTO: The Great Redwood Trail will one day traverse the scenic Eel River Canyon.

California's Great Redwood Trail

The 300-mile Great Redwood Trail begins its journey to becoming an invaluable asset for Northern California

BY LAURA STARK

It's a vision that elicits goosebumps: a 300-mile rail-trail stretching north from the San Francisco Bay, through wine country and the rugged canyons of Northern California and into the state's majestic redwood forests to Humboldt Bay. Although the Great Redwood Trail is just getting started, plans are under way to give this lofty dream a firm footing.

"It's time for the state of California to protect this one-of-a-kind, irreplaceable transportation corridor for future generations to enjoy," said State Sen. Mike McGuire, who is championing the project. "We're moving forward on preserving the right-of-way immediately. We're going to file our petition with the

federal government this year to railbank the corridor."

Additional steps include winding down the North Coast Rail Authority (NCRA)—the public entity previously responsible for the corridor—transitioning it into the Great Redwood Trail Authority, and completing a trail assessment. A small portion of the route incorporates existing trails, including the Eureka Waterfront Trail and the Humboldt Bay Trail. A master trail plan will provide a strategy and cost estimates for completing the vast remainder.

"While we need to complete the master plan, we're not waiting to start investing in the build-out of the Great Redwood Trail in municipalities along the North Coast," said

McGuire. "A little over \$32 million has already been secured over the last few months to advance specific segments of the trail."

Upcoming funded projects include closing a gap in the Humboldt Bay Trail between Eureka and Arcata, extending the Great Redwood Trail into downtown Willits and creating nearly 5 miles of walking and biking paths in Marin County.

As part of the trail planning process, town hall meetings took place earlier this year to engage local residents in the project. Laura Cohen, RTC's Western Regional Office director, who was invited by McGuire to speak at one of the meetings, vividly recalls the overwhelming support for the trail. "I was blown away by the attendance; there were well over 250 people there," said Cohen. "The staff had to keep bringing out more rows of chairs because it was so full."

The trail has also received wide support at the state level. The 2018 bill to dissolve the NCRA and move the project forward, as well as this summer's budget request for the trail—both proposed by McGuire—easily passed through the California legislature with bipartisan support.

Though the Great Redwood Trail is an ambitious undertaking, supporters hope it will usher in a new gold rush of tourism dollars among other important benefits for the region. In addition to serving transportation needs in populated settings, the trail will provide access to hidden gems in the state's more rural and remote areas, places that haven't been available to the public in decades.

"As you head north into Mendocino and Humboldt counties, you have some of the most incredible and beautiful natural resources, like the Eel River Canyon, which has never been seen by the majority of

TRAIL UNDER CONSTRUCTION: Great Redwood Trail

LOCATION: The trail will run between San Francisco Bay and Humboldt Bay, connecting the counties of Marin, Sonoma, Mendocino, Trinity and Humboldt.

USED RAILROAD CORRIDOR: Much of the trail will follow the former Northwestern Pacific Railroad right-of-way, partially owned by the North Coast Railroad Authority; the southern end of the route lies within the corridor of the active Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) commuter line.

LENGTH: 300 miles

SURFACE: The trail will be paved within the communities it connects and most likely unpaved in the more remote areas between towns.



PHOTO: The Eureka Waterfront Trail will become part of the Great Redwood Trail route.

people because it's inaccessible by road," said NCRA board member Caryl Hart.

"One of California's fastest-growing [financial] sectors is our outdoor recreational economy," said McGuire. "It generates \$92 billion every year in California. So not only is the Great Redwood Trail a monumental environmental project, but it's also going to be an economic driver in some of the most socioeconomically disadvantaged communities in the state."

Although many challenges lie ahead, and the trail will take many years to complete, enthusiasm for it is high. "This is a legacy project for the North Coast," said McGuire. "Generations of Californians and visitors to the Golden State will be able to enjoy the Great Redwood Trail. Is there a lot of work in front of us? Yes, but it's worth it."

For more information, go to: thegreatredwoodtrail.org.



The Great Redwood Trail will be part of the Bay Area Trails Collaborative (rtc.li/batc), an RTC TrailNation™ effort to create a 2,700-mile trail network across nine counties.

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OPPOSITE PAGE: CARYL HART; THIS PAGE: EMILY SINKHORN

Long-Distance Rides on the Great American Rail-Trail

BY LAURA STARK

CONTRIBUTIONS BY KEVIN BELANGER AND AMY KAPP

What better way to experience America's diverse landscapes than by bicycle? When complete, the Great American Rail-Trail will span some 3,700 miles across 12 states and Washington, D.C., but more than half the route is ready to ride now. Here are four sections that span 100 miles or more with minimal on-street connections—perfect for multiday adventuring. For more info, go to TrailLink.com.

All mileages listed below are approximate.

**GREAT
AMERICAN
RAIL-TRAIL™**

Washington, D.C./Pennsylvania

ICONIC RIDE: DC TO PITTSBURGH



A journey westward along the Great American Rail-Trail begins at the steps of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. The trail travels along the National Mall and among some of the country's most well-known landmarks, including the Washington Monument and the Smithsonian museums, before heading north at the Lincoln Memorial through expansive Rock Creek Park.

The route picks up the 11-mile Capital Crescent Trail in the vibrant Georgetown neighborhood and flows into the towpath of the 184.5-mile Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal National Historical Park, which stretches from Washington, D.C., to Cumberland, Maryland. Hundreds of original features can be seen along the way, including canal locks, lockhouses, aqueducts and other canal structures.

From Cumberland, the trail connects to the iconic Great Allegheny Passage (gaptrail.org), which runs 150 miles to Pittsburgh. Cool nods to its railroad history include the Salisbury Viaduct, Keystone Viaduct and Big Savage Tunnel. In Pittsburgh, the route picks up the Three Rivers Heritage Trail, which links the city's top attractions along its namesake three rivers—the Allegheny, Ohio and Monongahela—along a 20-miles-plus route. •

Length: 335 miles

Surface: The C&O Canal Towpath has varied surfaces. The Great Allegheny Passage is crushed stone. All other rail-trails are primarily paved.

To view an interactive map of the Great American Rail-Trail, go to greatamericanrailtrail.org.

Learn more about the C&O Canal Towpath in our feature story on page 14.

Ohio

BUCKEYE STATE: FREDERICKSBURG TO DAYTON



Featuring Amish Country and several major urban areas, the eastern leg is hosted by a portion of the developing 340-mile Ohio to Erie Trail. Beginning with the Holmes County and Mohican Valley trails, rural landscapes and a charming covered bridge take you to the Kokosing Gap Trail in Danville. Take in picturesque countryside on the Heart of Ohio Trail, after which you'll head 10 miles on road to the Galena Brick Trail. Enjoy great views of the Hoover Scenic Trail's namesake reservoir before reaching the Genoa Trail, which ends at the Westerville border.

Head south through Columbus on the Alum Creek Greenway Trail to the Downtown Connector Trail—and then pick up the Scioto Trail winding through downtown. The Camp Chase Trail takes you back to countryside and to the beautiful Roberts Pass Trail, which heads to the Prairie Grass Trail—rich in Underground Railroad history.

The Creekside Trail heads to Dayton and the 340-mile Miami Valley Trails system—where the Mad River Trail, the Great Miami River Trail (through downtown's RiverScape MetroPark) and the Wolf Creek Trail round things out. •

Length: 181 miles

Surface: All trails included in this section are paved; there is a 10-mile on-road section roughly between Centerburg and Galena (north of Columbus).

Nebraska

TASTE OF OLD WEST: NORFOLK TO VALENTINE



Nebraska's Cowboy Recreation and Nature Trail offers an authentic Old West experience, small towns with friendly people and picturesque landscapes of the High Plains and pristine prairie. Another standout feature of this trail is its bridges: There are more than 200 of them along the entire route.

The eastern end of the trail begins in Norfolk, about a two-hour drive from Omaha and Lincoln, and traverses the lush Elkhorn River Valley and quiet countryside. Toward the western end of the trail, travelers will pass through the grass-covered dunes of Sandhills country. Just west of Long Pine, a crystal-clear creek of the same name is a local favorite for trout fishing and tubing.

As you approach Valentine, you'll experience a highlight of the route: the Cowboy Trail's dramatic bridge over the Niobrara River, a National Scenic River. The impressive trestle spans a quarter-mile and rises 148 feet above the water.

Although dedicated trail restrooms and drinking fountains are not available, communities with amenities on the route are generally spaced 10–15 miles apart. (Spare bike tire tubes are recommended in case of punctures from puncturvine.)•

Length: 187 miles

Surface: Crushed limestone, with a few short, paved segments through communities. Hybrid or mountain bikes are recommended.

Read more about the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail in our cover story on page 8.

Washington State

MILWAUKEE ROAD: CEDAR FALLS TO BEVERLY



The expansive Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail features some of Washington's most beautiful geography along the former Milwaukee Road corridor. Begin at the Cedar Falls Trailhead at Olallie State Park in the Cascade foothills, just 35 miles from downtown Seattle. Heading east, the route crosses a half-dozen canyons on trestles with sweeping mountain vistas, and bores through the 100-year-old tunnel at Snoqualmie Pass. You'll skirt two beautiful lakes—Keechelus and Easton—and descend into the Upper Yakima Canyon, traveling through two more tunnels.

The old railroad yard in South Cle Elum, a National Historic Landmark, preserves the history of the corridor. The trail breaks briefly at historic Ellensburg, home to Central Washington University, and then leaves the irrigated agricultural land for the drier landscape of the U.S. Army Yakima Training Center.

After dropping into a basin carved by the Columbia River, the trail meets a break at the river; here, future trail users will be able to cross over the 2,200-foot Beverly Bridge—currently closed. The trail continues more than 100 miles through eastern Washington before ending at the Idaho border. •

Length: 110 miles

Surface: Primarily well-packed, crushed stone; there are about 20 miles of loose sand through the U.S. Army Yakima Training Center area (eastern side of trail).

Historic Crossings to Enhance Connectivity in Washington State

The Washington State legislature recently passed a budget with funds to rehabilitate and open the iconic Beverly Bridge for trail use. The project will provide a critical connection between the eastern and western parts of the state—opening up new opportunities for outdoor tourism and small business investment along the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail. Also passed in the state budget are funds to help revitalize the 975-foot-long historic Tekoa Trestle, near the state's eastern border, further enhancing connectivity for small communities along the route. •





Gateway Trail

The Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail is part of a group of 12 iconic “gateway” trails, one for each state in the route, that help make possible this grand vision of a nation connected by trails. Learn more: greatamericanrailtrail.org.

PALOUSE TO
CASCADES
STATE PARK
TRAIL

A NEW FRONTIER

STORY AND PHOTOS BY GENE BISBEE

Mountain passes. Narrow canyons. Evergreen forests. Desolate scablands. Fertile farmland. Most trails pass through one of these settings. The newly rebranded 200-miles-plus and growing Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail (palousetocascadestrail.org), formerly the John Wayne Pioneer Trail, in Washington encompasses them all in its cross-state journey.

PHOTO: An old railroad trestle crosses a side canyon on a remote section of the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail overlooking Rock Lake in eastern Washington.



Featuring some of the West's most stunning geography, the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail is being dubbed America's next great adventure trail, with the potential to spur tourism and economic investment along its 200+ miles. Learn more: palousetocascadestrail.org or rtc.li/wa-parks-palouse-cascades.

Length: 223.8 miles (285 when complete)
Counties: Adams, Grant, King, Kittitas, Spokane, Whitman
Endpoints: Cedar Falls Trailhead, Olallie State Park > Washington-Idaho border north of Tekoa (View a map on the inside back cover of this issue.)
Trail Uses: Walking, biking, fishing, horseback riding, wagon riding, cross-country skiing



Climbing into the craggy Cascade Range just beyond Seattle’s eastern suburbs, the developing trail ends 285 miles away (223.8 miles are currently complete) in a lonely wheat field as the packed gravel track crosses into Idaho. Along the way, it knits a varied landscape laid out by antediluvian volcanoes and carved by torrential Ice Age floods. The diversity is striking: Lush evergreen forests dominate the western section, while tumbleweeds blow across the trail midway, and fertile wheat fields rise in the rolling terrain of the Palouse in the east.

A western host trail for Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s (RTC’s) Great American Rail-Trail, the Palouse to Cascades trail and its improvements will become a geographic highlight of the 3,700-miles-plus developing route, according to local trail advocates.

“The big picture is this could be one of the premier state parks and rail-trails in the United States,” said Fred Wert, treasurer of the Palouse to Cascades Trail Coalition. “People are attracted to these long adventures. It’s a huge showcase for our state.”

Many parts of the trail are as raw as the landscape it crosses, especially in the east, where the population is lower and the trail is less developed. But the Palouse to Cascades trail is finally getting some love as the state is closing major gaps and proposing improvements to the rough surface to make it accessible to a broad range of users.

“We’d like to see the trail gaps closed and a surface that’s acceptable for riding,” said Marilyn Hedges, chair of the Palouse to Cascades Trail Coalition. The western 110 miles of the rail-trail generally meet those goals—the sparsely populated area east of the Columbia River not so much. Another priority in the east is to provide trail-side campsites, like those in the west.

One of the trail’s greatest proponents is the governor himself, Jay Inslee. “We’ve got a state that’s chock full of treasures,” Inslee stated, adding that the Palouse to Cascades trail passes through an “incredible” variety

ALONG ITS ROUTE, THE TRAIL KNITS A VARIED LANDSCAPE LAID OUT BY ANTEDILUVIAN VOLCANOES AND CARVED BY TORRENTIAL ICE AGE FLOODS.



“We’ve got a state that’s chock full of treasures. Having a unified trail that people can use is a great thing for [Washington].”

Gov. Jay Inslee,
Washington State

of landscapes and connects the history of the state, its indigenous people, its economy and its culture. “Having a unified trail that people can use is a great thing for [Washington].”

Most would agree that the trail in its entirety is not ready for prime time. “There are sections—long sections—that are accessible to families,” said Jon Snyder, the governor’s senior policy advisor for Outdoor Recreation and Economic Development. “But as a whole, going from one end to the other, it’s for folks with a hardy sense of adventure.”

But this could change—and soon—as trail advocates in Washington State and beyond work to improve and complete the cross-state route and majestic nod to America’s railroad history.

The Old “Milwaukee Road”

The Palouse to Cascades trail traces its beginnings to the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad, a transcontinental rail line known popularly as the Milwaukee Road. Getting its start in Wisconsin as the Milwaukee & Waukesha in 1847, the railroad expanded across the farm belt in the upper Midwest. In the early 20th century, company officers opted to extend the line to the Pacific Northwest to remain competitive.

Historians say that the Milwaukee Road was late to the party, as the first transcontinental railroad had been completed 40 years earlier.

“Most of the easier routes were already taken,” said Mark Borleske, a local historian and vice president of the Cascade Rail Foundation. That was the Milwaukee Road had to bore two tunnels to get through the tight Yakima River canyon, for instance, while the rival Northern Pacific had taken a tunnel-free route

on the other side of the river that's still in use today.

Extending west through Montana, Idaho and Washington to its main terminus on the Puget Sound in Tacoma, the railroad company dug some 50 tunnels (seven are still open on the trail in Washington), erected countless bridges and trestles and crossed five mountain ranges.

"They had fewer choices of routes, but they had the benefit of engineering advances," said Borleske. "They were able to use steam shovels instead of thousands of men chopping away at rock and carrying debris away in wheelbarrows."

The railroad finished the 1,400-mile extension in just three years and launched freight service in 1909. Passenger service began two years later and blossomed into the streamlined fleet of plush Hiawatha trains that, by the late 1940s, could make the Tacoma-Chicago run in 44 hours. The railroad electrified about a third of the route, creating the longest electrified train route at the time. Two of the electric substations still stand, one near Othello and the other at the renovated station complex and museum in South Cle Elum.

All those expenses took their toll, however, and the railroad enjoyed only a few profitable years. It succumbed to poor management and the malaise that befell the entire industry in the 1950s and 1960s, pulling the plug on the western extension in the late 1970s.

"Generating Good Ideas"

The state acquired the corridor for \$3 million in 1980, and avid horseman Chic Hollenbeck, founder of the John Wayne Pioneer Wagons and Riders Association (johnwaynetrailride.com), successfully lobbied the state to make it a trail named for his cowboy idol. That name stood until 2018, when the state changed

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL CONNECTIONS

The Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail is a western host trail for the 3,700-mile developing Great American Rail-Trail, which will one day stretch between Washington, D.C., and Washington State. A half-dozen other trails in the state, including the Snoqualmie Valley Regional Trail and the Burke Gilman Trail in the Seattle area and the Olympic Discovery Trail on the Olympic Peninsula, also host the route, and a connection plan for these trails is being studied to help complete an off-road link to the Pacific Ocean. •

the name to reflect the regions it connects.

Beginning in 1981, the John Wayne association began wagon trips, often traveling from the summit of the Cascades to the Idaho border. Tom Short, who's been involved with the association for some 15 years, said their purpose is to promote and improve the trail and, of course, have fun. "The big thing, for somebody with a wagon, is there are very few places where you can do this, go 220 miles over two weeks," said Short. "When you finish, you really don't want to stop."

Some 120 people took the trip this spring by horseback and in wagons. Short estimates the caravan spent \$30,000 to \$40,000 in the small communities along the route. He said, "From Cedar Falls to Ellensburg, the trail is very easy to use. East of the Columbia there are detours, and the tread can be intimidating, but it's much better than when I started 15 years ago." He explained that the association worked alone for trail improvements for many years, but "today, the Palouse to Cascades Trail Coalition has joined us in our goal of a finished trail. There's more involvement and more people generating good ideas."

Rough Conditions

Of course, the very same geography and railroad history that make the trail a majestic experience are what now

"There are very few places where you can do this, go 220 miles over two weeks [with a wagon]. When you finish, you really don't want to stop."

Tom Short, Vice President, John Wayne Pioneer Wagons and Riders Association

PHOTO: Naoko Reynolds of North Bend frequently rides up to a trestle in the Cascades that overlooks her favorite spot on the trail.



present the most challenges for its development—and everyone interviewed indicates that, yes, a sense of adventure is important for an optimal experience.

One of those sporting that sense of adventure is Troy Hopwood, who launched the annual Cross Washington Mountain Bike Race that now rolls from the Pacific Ocean to the Idaho border each May. It utilizes several parts of the Palouse to Cascades trail, but the most difficult is in the east. “Two things come up repeatedly. One is a challenge; the other is an annoyance,” said Hopwood.

The challenge is the surface. “It’s rough enough that it wears you down; your hands go numb and there are saddle issues,” Hopwood stated. The annoyance is the frequency of locked gates that block the trail, every couple of miles in some cases. Lock combinations are supplied with permits issued by the state parks commission or the Department of Natural Resources, depending on who manages a section. If the locks don’t open, users have to hoist their bikes over the gates.

Fred Wert of the trail coalition agrees that the biggest need is improvement of the surface. “The park is the trail, and the trail is the experience of biking or walking or horseback riding. So if the surface is not sufficient, it hurts the whole experience,” he said.

Randy Kline, the state’s trails program manager, concurs that the trail surface can be a challenge in the east, affirming that it’s often loose gravel or ballast left from the railroad days. Because the substrate is rock hard and there’s little rain, gravel can stay loose on the surface instead of being pressed into the subgrade. Kline says his office is currently working to upgrade the surface.

The locked gates with combinations supplied with the permits are something trail neighbors wanted in order to prevent trespassing, vandalizing and dumping. As the trail is developed, Kline said, he sees phasing out the permit process and installing gates that users can ride their bikes or horses around. “We’re working with adjacent property owners to find ways to eliminate gates that don’t provide a ride-around option. This can be a challenge in cattle country, and we want to show them we can be a good neighbor,” said Kline.

A Diverse Landscape

Despite these issues, the Palouse to Cascades trail has huge potential. “One of the amazing things about the trail is its diversity,” said Hopwood. He recently participated in a trans-America bike race that used trails, roads with bike lanes, and gravel roads, and maintains that



PHOTOS: (Left) Bicyclists in a Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust event prepare to enter the 2.2-mile former railroad tunnel through Snoqualmie Pass. (Right) Members of the John Wayne Pioneer Wagons and Riders Association near Ellensburg on their annual cross-state pilgrimage.

none of the trails in the race “had [as much] diversity and variety along its length as the Palouse to Cascades.”

Geology and climate combine to create a dazzling assortment of landscapes along the route, which passes across miles of thick deposits of lava—called flood basalts—that covered eastern Washington millions of years ago. Buried by fertile soil, the basalts were exposed and carved by massive Ice Age floods that repeatedly swept through the area from Montana. That dry landscape, termed “channeled scablands,” is marked by towering buttes and steep-sided canyons called coulees.

From its western trailhead at Cedar Falls, the trail passes through the forested Cascade Range. The crushed-stone trail is in better condition on the 76-mile run to Ellensburg, and primitive camping is available.

The section between Cedar Falls and Hyak, stretching for 22 miles east of the Cedar Falls Trailhead, is the most popular, as many users arrange shuttle trips to Snoqualmie Pass, make a chilly passage through the unlit 2.2-mile Snoqualmie Tunnel, then enjoy an easy downhill bike ride through the evergreens to the Cedar Falls trailhead. Several long trestles brush the treetops across canyons that reveal views of the wilderness beyond. The trail, but not the tunnel, is used by cross-country skiers in the winter.

This dramatic setting has been preserved from urban sprawl in part by efforts of the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust (mtsgreenway.org), which succeeded this year in getting Congress to designate the 1.5 million-acre greenway through the mountains as one of 54 National Heritage Areas—the first in the Northwest—in recognition of its historic, cultural and natural resources.

Typo

Over the past few years, interest by the state in upgrading and completing the trail has been building momentum—with several major projects generating steam.

Most agree that this increased involvement was sparked in 2015 when legislators from eastern Wash-

200+
Current mileage of the developing Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail

7
No. of open tunnels along the Palouse to Cascades trail

1909
Year the Milwaukee Road was completed through Washington



ington crafted a state budget proviso that would have given a large stretch of trail east of the Columbia River to adjacent landowners. The action failed because of an error in the wording of the proviso, but “it galvanized everybody,” said Hedges.

“Call it the law of unintended consequences. The effort to close the trail resulted in it getting attention and momentum for connectivity as a cross-state trail,” said Borleske. Within a year, dozens of communities had petitioned against the giveaway, the coalition was formed, and trail advocates testified in Olympia in support of the trail in eastern Washington.

“The trail (east of the Columbia) had sat there unmaintained by the state for years,” Hedges said. Pretty soon, however, support rolled in from across the state, and parks planners held hearings to get ideas from trail advocates and neighbors. In July 2016, the commission affirmed its commitment to a cross-state trail system incorporating the entire length of the Palouse to Cascades trail.

And so the trail is embarking on a new chapter—one that could eventually see it become a new frontier to explore the geography, natural beauty and history of the American West.

New Projects, New Excitement

Of four trail projects currently under way, one that’s generating much excitement is a \$5.5 million renovation and reopening of the half-mile-long Beverly Bridge across the Columbia River. With no safe non-vehicular crossing for a 100-mile stretch of river, this gap at the currently closed bridge—which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places—truly had divided the trail. (View a feature video on the Beverly Bridge in the 2018 Green Issue of *Rails to Trails*: rtc.li/building-bridges.)

When complete, the project will remove a major gap in the trail and unite the east and west trail sections. The funding request, which was submitted by Gov. Inslee and approved by the legislature, will go toward installing decking and railing on the bridge, a project that is projected to take two years.

To the west, the state is upgrading the closed Renslow Trestle that crosses I-90 about 12 miles east of Ellensburg. With completion expected in 2020, the \$1.2 million project to add decking and railing will close the last major trail gap west of the Columbia River.

A third project targets the closed trestle in Tekoa, about 5 miles from the Idaho border. The 975-foot trestle soars 115 feet above the north end of town, considered an economic hub of the wheat-growing Palouse region during railroad days. Supporters believe the approximately \$1.7 million project will represent another key attraction along the trail.

The fourth project—\$1.7 million to improve about 9 miles of trail surface between Rosalia and Malden—has been delayed until next year while a state Department of Commerce contractor meets with adjacent landowners and others to study potential effects of the trail on Eastern Washington counties. “This would be a huge shot in the arm for the community,” said Nan Konishi, former mayor of Rosalia and secretary of the coalition. The town’s proximity to Spokane via a major highway (US 195) could make it a destination for day trips by bicyclists or cross-country skiers on the trail. “It’s a perfect economic tool.”

Jeff Chapman, a member of Back Country Horsemen (bcha.org) and John Wayne Pioneer Wagons and Riders, agrees. “We see it as an economic development boon for Malden and Rosalia,” he said, adding that some farmers and ranchers in those communities have concerns about the trail, including potential trespassing, vandalism and illegal dumping. “We’re trying to get those towns to feel that trails are an asset and not a liability.”

Upon completion of these four projects, eight trail gaps will remain, as well as several long sections—up to 80 miles in one case—with no services. Nevertheless, support for the trail and its eventual completion continues to build steam along the old Milwaukee Road, and trail supporters hope its rebirth as a first-class trail and host of the Great American Rail-Trail could boost the economic well-being of the same areas that prospered from the arrival of rail 100 years ago.

“When people ride east to west [through America], they get to the best part when they get to Washington,” affirmed Gov. Inslee. “The idea that they can do this on a trail is a tremendous opportunity. Washington is great, but it’s even greater on a bike.”

“[The trail is] a perfect economic tool.”

Nan Konishi, former mayor of Rosalia and Secretary of the Palouse to Cascades Trail Coalition



Gene Bisbee is a freelance writer and editor for *Rails-to-Trails Conservancy*. Bisbee covers bicycle touring issues on his blog at BikingBis.com and is the author of the book “*Falcon Guide: Best Bike Rides Seattle*.” He lives in Bellevue, Washington.

WASHINGTON, D.C. AND MARYLAND

PRESERVING AN AMERICAN

LEGACY

CHESAPEAKE & OHIO CANAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

BY DANIELLE TAYLOR



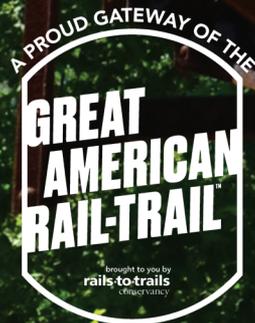
The C&O Canal and its towpath served as a significant transportation corridor for early America and helped open access between Washington, D.C., and the western part of the country. Now a popular trail for commuting, recreation and outdoor tourism, it serves as an economic asset for communities along the route, and a lasting legacy of our country's history. Learn more: rtc.li/CO-Canal.

Length: 184.5 miles

Districts/Counties: Washington, D.C./Montgomery, Frederick, Washington, Allegany (Maryland)

Endpoints: Washington, D.C. (Georgetown) > Cumberland, Maryland

Trail Uses: Walking, biking, fishing, horseback riding, mountain biking, cross-country skiing; wheelchair accessible



Gateway Trail

The C&O Canal Towpath is part of a group of 12 iconic “gateway” trails along the Great American Rail-Trail that help make possible this grand vision of a nation connected by trails. Learn more: greatamericanrailtrail.org.

The story of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal (C&O Canal) is a story of the early days of the United States. None other than George Washington first sought to develop a canal along the Potomac River, aiming to connect the resource-rich lands west of the Allegheny Mountains with the markets along the East Coast. Ultimately, he believed a canal could help expand the young country’s boundaries.

For nearly 150 years, the C&O Canal and its predecessors provided a commercial corridor that served the towns along its route and business interests at either end. Today it is a historically and economically significant public landscape that supports active recreation and transportation, access to nature, and the livelihoods of thousands of families. However, without a few influential visionaries, the canal and its revival as a recreation destination might never have come to life.

PHOTO: Along the C&O Canal Towpath in Williamsport, Maryland

DANIELLE TAYLOR (SPREAD), LEE GOODWIN (INSET)

A Historic Transportation Corridor

During the 1780s and 1790s, America embarked on a journey of self-reliance and launched explorations into the interior of the continent. George Washington recognized the value of the Potomac River as a conduit from the headwaters of the Ohio River, which reached deep into the frontier, but he noted major obstacles such as Great Falls, where the Potomac plummets nearly 80 feet in less than a mile. Overall, the river drops 605 feet in the 185 miles between Cumberland, Maryland, and sea level at what is now Washington, D.C.

Washington approached Maryland and Virginia's state assemblies and urged them to authorize infrastructure to circumvent the river's unnavigable stretches. The states agreed, and in 1785 the Patowmack Company began building short skirting canals. These opened transportation along the Potomac, but fluctuating river conditions and high expenses led the company to sell to the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Company. This outfit broke ground on July 4, 1828, aspiring to connect the Ohio River with Tidewater Virginia. Nearby, the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad (B&O Railroad) began construction the same day and sought a route that would closely parallel the canal.

Water traffic began in 1830, with mules pulling boats by walking along the towpath, and by 1850 the canal stretched from D.C. to Cumberland. By then, however, railroads, including the B&O, far outstripped the canal's transport speed, and the C&O Canal Company abandoned its plans to extend to Pittsburgh. Unsustainable operating expenses and an 1889 flood forced it into bankruptcy, and the B&O Railroad acquired the canal's assets to keep the corridor from going to a competing railroad. Operations finally ceased after a catastrophic flood in 1924.

Walking to Preserve an American Treasure

For 14 years, the canal continued to deteriorate. Then in 1938, the federal government purchased it, and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) began to transform it into a recreation area. The CCC assigned hundreds of young African-American enrollees to the project, and over three years, they restored and rewatered the canal's easternmost 22 miles.

After World War II, the Army Corps of Engineers wanted to build dams along the Potomac that would flood portions of the canal. The National Park Service (NPS) supported a proposal to pave it over and turn it into a parkway, and Congress authorized a study to pursue the idea. However, many others, including Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, who lived near Lock 5 and trekked 15 to 20 miles along the towpath each week, wanted to



PHOTO: (Clockwise from left) Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas along the C&O Canal Towpath in 1968; a section of the towpath in Great Falls, Maryland; a portion of the towpath near its eastern terminus in Georgetown (Washington, D.C.)



“In Williamsport, the former mayor had a saying. ‘The canal was our past, but now it’s our future.’”

Kevin Brandt, Park Superintendent, Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park

restore the corridor as a public recreational landscape.

When *The Washington Post* published a January 1954 editorial backing the parkway proposal, Douglas shot back a letter in the canal's defense. He invited the editors to walk with him for the canal's full 185-mile length, hoping to change their minds and ultimately “use the power of [the *Post*’s] great editorial page to help keep this sanctuary untouched”

The editors accepted, and in March 1954, they set out—along with naturalists, conservationists and supporters of restoration—on foot from Cumberland, led by Justice Douglas. Public support for the canal's preservation intensified as the walk progressed. By the time the group arrived in D.C. after eight days, the newspaper editors had changed their minds and issued a retraction of their editorial.

Bending to public opinion, the NPS revised its plans. By 1958, the entire towpath had been cleared for hiking, and through-riders began biking its length by 1960. In January 1961, President Dwight Eisenhower designated it a national monument. Congress passed legislation to create the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park (C&O Canal Towpath) in 1971, and President Richard Nixon signed it into law.

Economic Significance

The C&O's operations in the 1800s and 1900s provided important economic support for a number of towns along the canal, and many still exist and continue to benefit from the canal as a tourism attraction. In 2018, more than 4.4 million people came to the park. During their visits, they rented bikes, ate meals, bought supplies and stayed overnight in these historic trail towns. According to a 2018 NPS report, C&O Canal Towpath visitors spent more than \$84.4 million in these communities last year.

Many owners of the businesses that trail users frequent set up shop specifically because of the C&O's popularity. In Williamsport, Beverly Kipe and her daughter, Rose Harris, opened Desert Rose Café after recognizing the opportunity from their own trail experiences.

PRESERVING A HISTORIC LEGACY

The C&O Canal Towpath is a gateway trail in the eastern portion of the Great American Rail-Trail, a proposed cross-country route by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC). Although more than half of the Great American is in place, many sections require significant work, and RTC has identified several maintenance projects as priority initiatives in pursuit of the trail's development, including along a portion of the towpath.

The Allegheny Trail Alliance conducted a safety assessment of the C&O Canal Towpath surface in 2016 and categorized 75 percent as fair or poor. Much of the dirt towpath is disrupted by issues such as mud, ruts, potholes, grass and tree roots. Additionally, nearly 200 19th-century culverts pass beneath the towpath, and the National Park Service has recognized the need for a comprehensive hydrology study to assess their condition and develop an improvement plan. RTC has prioritized the need to identify funding to address these challenges and has pledged to advocate for continued surface improvements.

"[The C&O Canal offers] an extraordinary legacy from the early 19th century, which we are fortunate to have inherited," said Marianne Wesley Fowler, RTC's senior strategist for policy advocacy. "The canal on the Virginia side of the Potomac is mostly gone except for the locks at Great Falls. That the C&O Canal Towpath remains essentially intact is a bit of a miracle abetted by the hard work and allegiance of supporters through the centuries. We wish to continue that stewardship." •

"We chose Williamsport because of the canal," Harris said. "We would bike and then wanted a healthy option for food and a place to relax afterwards, and none was available." In addition to a delicious menu, the café also offers luggage transfer services and emergency provisions to tide over trail customers between bike shops. Business increases by 50 percent during bike season, Harris reported, and in their 11 years of operation, they've had customers from all 50 states and every continent.

The C&O Canal Trust (canaltrust.org)—the park's official nonprofit partner—worked with trail town leaders to develop the Canal Towns Partnership in 2011, which unifies support for the park among the communities it touches. Owners of private businesses tied to the trail have a mutual economic interest in sustaining an inviting, unbroken corridor and feel the impact when any point gets disrupted. They've committed to keeping it fully open and functioning smoothly.

In May 2018, flooding washed out a trail section between Point of Rocks and Brunswick, and trailside business owners quickly foresaw the hit they'd take during the busy season if prospective through-riders changed their plans.

"When we don't have continuous trail, word spreads very quickly," said Becky Curtis, the trust's director of programs and partnerships. "The Park Service was working to get a bridge in there, but that takes time. So the Canal Towns rallied together and said, 'We can't have this. We have to be able to provide a continuous experience for visitors.' In the course of 48 hours, they raised enough money to fund a free shuttle service around the breach. It ran for about a month and a half until the Park Service put in a low-water crossing."

Funding for the shuttle came from the towns adjacent to the washout as well as communities far down the line and off the trail. "Towns like Hancock, which is 50 miles from the breach, are seeing the benefit," said Curtis.

"I have to brag on the Canal Towns Partnership," said Maryland State Delegate Mike McKay, who represents District 1C in Washington and Allegany counties. "We don't have a tremendous amount of money individually, but together we can solve these problems."

Preservation and Progress Challenges

During the C&O's operations, lock tenders lived in houses by the canal so they could "lock through" each boat. Since 2009, the NPS has restored seven lockhouses, and through the C&O Canal Trust's Canal Quarters program, visitors can book an overnight stay in one (canalquarters.org). Forty volunteer quartermasters help maintain the lockhouses, and so far, more than 20,000 people have experienced this unique taste of canal life.

The program's revenue covers the upkeep of the seven lockhouses, but the park also contains 1,300+ other historical structures, more than 5 percent of the National Park System's inventory. These include locks, lockhouses, a 3,118-foot tunnel, aqueducts, culverts, and the canal prism (where the surface of the canal is wider than the bottom) and towpath themselves. Deferred maintenance due to insufficient funding is a systemwide problem for the NPS, and last year, the C&O Canal Towpath had more than \$91.5 million in unmet repairs on file. However, Park Superintendent Kevin Brandt said, "Whatever our number is, it only represents the infrastructure we actually have done condition assessments on. There are a lot of historic structures that we have not assessed. Therefore,

"We don't have a tremendous amount of money individually, but together we can solve these problems."

Maryland State Delegate Mike McKay, District 1C

“[The C&O Canal offers] an extraordinary legacy from the early 19th century, which we are fortunate to have inherited.”

Marianne Wesley Fowler, Senior Strategist for Policy Advocacy, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy



our complete number would be higher.”

Other concerns include surfacing problems (see sidebar), accessibility issues and rewatering initiatives. Only about 25 miles of the canal currently hold water, and significant sections, such as Georgetown, have thick vegetation in the canal prism.

Still, the park, the C&O Canal Trust and their partners have had some major successes in addition to the lockhouse revivals, and more are on the horizon. In August, they completed the restoration of the Conococheague Aqueduct at Williamsport, a two-year, \$10.2 million project, and broke ground on the park’s new headquarters and visitor center at the same location. At the park’s eastern end, nonprofit Georgetown Heritage (georgetownheritage.org) is leading the effort to repair locks and other historic structures, create a new visitor center, develop a mule yard for canal boat rides, improve accessibility and rewater the first mile of the canal.

Although ongoing construction and limited federal funding hamper the park’s ability to completely restore the canal’s original aesthetic, partner groups like the C&O Canal Trust and Georgetown Heritage help address these issues by fundraising and financing projects outside the constraints of the park’s federal budget. Additionally, approximately 4,000 volunteers donate their time to the C&O Canal each year, a significant show of public support.

Looking Ahead

Despite its challenges, the C&O Canal National Historical



Park remains one of the country’s most-visited national parks, and a bright future awaits. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy has included it as a major portion of its planned cross-country Great American Rail-Trail (greatamericanrailtrail.org), and trail managers hope that the increased attention will encourage support and funding for new programs and restoration work. The trail corridor continues on to Pittsburgh with the Great Allegheny Passage (gaptrail.org), and more through-riders are taking continuous bicycling trips between D.C. and Pittsburgh for a bucket-list experience.

As park visitor numbers go up, more businesses come to the canal towns to serve them, boosting local economies while allowing these communities to keep their historical character and connections to their roots intact.

“In Williamsport, the former mayor had a saying,” Brandt recalled. “The canal was our past, but now it’s our future.” •



Danielle Taylor is a freelance journalist focusing on outdoor recreation, conservation, public lands and travel. She especially enjoys learning about and sharing the stories of America’s national parks. Follow her work on adventureeditorial.com, Facebook @adventureeditorial or Twitter @adventureedit.

Keith Laughlin: Evolution of a Movement

Former Rails-to-Trails President
Named 2019 Rail-Trail Champion

BY AMY KAPP



When Keith Laughlin became the second president of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) in 2001, he did not envision he'd help usher in a golden age for trails. He was just excited for the next chapter of his career, a duration of "five to seven years," he told the board, in which he hoped his 22 years of experience as a senior staffer in the U.S. House of Representatives and associate director for the White House Council on Environmental Quality would help continue to grow the maturing non-profit, founded in 1986.

But good things come *from* those who wait. And Laughlin—who retired in February 2019 after 18 years at the helm and has been named RTC's 2019 Doppelt Family Rail-Trail Champion—looks back now with wonder at his time with RTC and the mass evolution of a movement: from an effort to weave trails into the American landscape, to a nationwide strategy to create thriving trail networks in pursuit of healthy, connected communities.

Building a Foundation

"Build healthier places for healthier people." Formally integrated into RTC's mission statement in 2004, it was an idea Laughlin would percolate upon his arrival, having been heavily influenced by his work in smart growth and sustainability. While Laughlin says his first few years were really about organizational growth—"I wasn't trying to be visionary," he affirmed—he knew trails could offer powerful solutions to challenges related to transportation, economic development and health.

To that end, Laughlin set his focus on: 1) expanding the movement to increase trail use and support for trails; and 2) protect and grow trail funding, with a focus on the Transportation Enhancements program (TE), aka Transportation Alternatives, the largest source of federal trail funding since 1991.

In 2003, the focus on federal funding would prove critical when TE came under attack in the U.S. House of Representatives—and in a watershed moment for trails, RTC mobilized with Rep. Tom Petri (R-WI) and the late Rep. Jim Oberstar (D-MN) to secure House votes against its elimination, resulting in a dramatic 327 to 90

victory. "It was a key milestone for the movement that paved the way for us to play offense ... [and] generate billions of dollars for trail development," said Laughlin.

A few years later, Laughlin helped pave the way for another game-changing initiative: RTC's national mapping program, which now documents more than 35,000 miles of rail-trails and multiuse trails accessed by more than 7 million people each year through **TrailLink.com**. "The mapping program had a huge impact," said Laughlin. "It made it possible for millions of people to find and use trails ... and it showed us how much the movement had grown, setting the stage for our focus on trail network development."

Connecting a Trail Nation

By the 2010s, national rail-trail mileage had nearly doubled (reaching 24,000+ miles as of 2019). Laughlin posed a thesis that by connecting completed trails into a "whole network," you could create benefits much greater than the sum of their parts—related to health, economic development and tourism, mobility and conservation.

By 2017, through its national TrailNation™ portfolio, RTC had signed on to help lead the development of eight trail network projects serving millions of Americans. In January 2019, Laughlin led the launch of the country's most ambitious trail project ever—the 3,700-mile Great American Rail-Trail connecting Washington, D.C., and Washington State, which—with origins from RTC's early days—demonstrates the incredible growth of the movement over the past decades.

With his designation as the 2019 Rail-Trail Champion, Laughlin is placed in a list that includes some of the most esteemed trail supporters in the country. But he is modest about the award, preferring to credit his colleagues and the passionate trail advocates he's met along the way. "I've seen quite a few people who have received this award who were really in the trenches getting trails built—at a time when they were up against tremendous odds," said Laughlin. "From the national level, they sort of looked up to us, but I more looked up to them. I'm honored to be in their company."•



Since 2011, the Doppelt Family Rail-Trail Champions Award has honored more than 35 individuals around the nation who have made significant contributions to the rail-trail movement through their hard work, volunteerism or support—in short, people who have gone above and beyond in the name of trails. Learn more: rtc.li/trail-champions.

Read an extended history of the movement from the Spring/Summer 2016 issue of *Rails to Trails* magazine at rtc.li/RTC-30-years.

Mississippi's Tanglefoot Trail: 2019 Rail-Trail Hall of Fame Inductee

BY LAURA STARK



Rails-to-Trails Conservancy was pleased to announce northern Mississippi's Tanglefoot Trail as the 2019 inductee to the Rail-Trail Hall of Fame (railstotrails.org/halloffame) in July—upon the trail's selection via a national contest acquiring more than 26,000 votes. Nominees are selected on merits such as scenic value, high use, trail and trailside amenities, historical significance, excellence in management and maintenance, and community connections.

Here are just a few ways the Tanglefoot Trail (tanglefoottrail.com) exemplifies the qualities of a Hall of Fame Trail. Congratulations, Tanglefoot!

The Tanglefoot Trail is the state's longest rail-trail, stretching 43.6 miles through the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area. Its views are rural and picturesque; cattle and horses roam the pastures alongside the trail, and fields of soybeans, cotton and corn unfold under a wide sky. Lush wooded sections offer cool riding in the summer and bright pops of color in the autumn.

SCENIC VALUE



THIS PAGE: WENDY CROSBY, COURTESY MIGHTYBUS.WORDPRESS.COM. OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP: RICK ARENDT, ELLEN RUSSELL

Nestled in the heart of the largest towns on the trail—New Albany, Pontotoc and Houston—gateway facilities serve as gathering places for visitors, offering a variety of amenities and services such as information centers, gift shops and restaurants. In the more sparsely populated areas, four “whistle stops” ensure that trail users have the amenities they need—including restrooms, drinking water and picnic tables—every few miles.

TRAILSIDE AMENITIES

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

The trail winds through three counties (Chickasaw, Pontotoc and Union) and six communities (New Albany, Ecu, Pontotoc, Algoma, New Houlka and Houston)—bringing with it powerful benefits for the rural Southern region it serves. The Tanglefoot fosters a tourism economy while also providing important transportation, health and cultural opportunities for residents.



HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Established by Native Americans, the trail was traced by famed explorers Hernando de Soto and Meriwether Lewis and called the King's Highway after the last Chickasaw King Ishtehotopah, who made his home near a creek where the trail crosses. The route was renamed the Tanglefoot—after one of the train engines—and opened as a rail-trail in 2013. It follows the route of a former rail line led in the 1800s by Col. William C. Falkner, great grandfather of Nobel-Prize-winning author William Faulkner.

Each of the communities along the route has a role in the trail's governance, fostering a regional approach to decision-making. The trail is also sponsored by nearly 100 local businesses, which are active participants in its development. A huge source of pride for residents, the Tanglefoot's paved surface and trailside facilities are kept in pristine condition.

EXCELLENCE IN MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF FACILITY





Washington State

Ian Mackay: Where There's a Wheel, There's a Way

BY SCOTT STARK

It takes a certain kind of dedication to get out on a trail every day. Like, every day. Seven days a week. Rain or shine. Scorching days, freezing days and every kind of day in between. "The last day I missed was Halloween 2016," said Ian Mackay. He surpassed consecutive day number 1,000 in July.

He wasn't always so dedicated, though. A self-described avid cyclist in college, he certainly spent time outdoors, but it took nearly losing everything to instill the passion he has today. "I was 26 years old when I broke my neck," Mackay explained. He was cruising home from classes at the University of California Santa Cruz in 2008 on a bike path when he hit a patch of gravel, lost control and slammed headfirst into a tree. "My helmet probably saved my life," he said, but the impact left him paralyzed from the neck down.

"You never can expect something like that," he said. "You can't plan for that. Your whole life gets turned upside down. It was ... a dark time for me." He moved back to his hometown of Port Angeles, Washington, to live with his mother and spent a couple of years trying to figure out how to live his new life as a quadriplegic.

Nature's the Best Medicine

A motorized wheelchair powered by

sip-and-puff inputs coupled with the ever-improving voice recognition capabilities of a smartphone offered Mackay a degree of independence, and allowed him to get outside without a caregiver at his side. The Olympic Discovery Trail, a rail-trail that runs near his home, called to him. "That trail is where I found my solace," Mackay said. "I was a field biologist before. I spent a ton of time outside." Now, he said, "I could start exploring the Pacific Northwest on my own and appreciate those loves I had before I was injured."

Those loves grew into a passion and, from there, a dedication. "Nature's the best medicine," he said.

As Mackay's forays on his nearby trail proved successful, he found himself putting in up to 20 miles a day on his chair. After two years of daily explorations, Mackay felt that he'd exhausted all the trail options in his area and was looking for something more challenging. "I joked with my mom about riding across the state. She laughed—but within a few months we ironed out the details and made it happen."

Those details included provisions for charging and swapping out battery packs for his motorized chair, and a small cadre of helpers to support the 11-day trip. The ride, from Canada south across

Washington and into Portland, Oregon, "inspired a lot of people, I guess," Mackay explained in an understated way.

Ian's Ride

With the help of supporters interested in helping him create a nonprofit organization, Ian's Ride (iansride.com) was born in late 2017 to help continue Mackay's work in outdoor advocacy. Along the way, Mackay has become a prominent voice for people with disabilities and an advocate for more accessible trails. "I don't want to pave the world," Mackay insisted. "I'm a naturalist at heart. I love our wild lands—I just want to be able to access them."

To that end, he suggests trail designers avoid stairs and steep slopes whenever possible, opting instead for switchbacks. It's probably simplest, he said, for designers to keep stroller-pushing parents in mind. "Their needs generally align with folks in chairs."

Having thoroughly explored the Olympic Discovery Trail—one end of the developing 3,700-mile Great American Rail-Trail—Mackay said he was eager to one day try for the whole length, ending up in Washington, D.C. "It's definitely on my mind. I might need a slightly faster chair." •

PHOTOS: (Left) Ian Mackay (second from left) at the foot of Mount Rainier with friends Jesse Collens, Kenny Salvini and Todd Stabelfeldt. (Right) Ian Mackay's father, Scott, hitches a lift from Ian in Sequim during the homestretch of Mackay's 2018 ride across Washington State.

"That trail is where I found my solace."

Ian Mackay, Founder, Ian's Ride



A writer and a rider, Colorado native Scott Stark enjoys combining the two as he explores trails across the country.



Highlights of an Illinois Treasure: Hennepin Canal Parkway

BY MAGGIE MCADEN

Stretching over 104 miles, Illinois' Hennepin Canal Parkway connects five counties and numerous communities along a former canal towpath completed in 1907. A gateway trail for the 3,700-miles-plus Great American Rail-Trail (greatamericanrailtrail.org), the route is a Midwest treasure, rich with history and outdoor recreational opportunities. More info: rtc.li/Hennepin-Canal_Parkway.

PRESERVING AN ILLINOIS TREASURE

Surrounded by wetlands, prairie and farmland, the Hennepin Canal Parkway enables trail users to delve into the natural beauty and history of northwest Illinois. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, much of its original infrastructure remains, with 33 locks and six aqueducts still intact, a few of which have been restored. Trail advocates are urging the state to provide critical funding to help preserve this regional treasure. More info: friends-hennepin-canal.org.

Lock 21 Lift Bridge

The rustic lift bridge, located at Lock 21, was constructed to be raised, allowing barges to slide underneath when the canal was the center of Midwestern industry. Built in 1904 and restored in 1976, trail users will come across this historical highlight near the quaint community of Wyanet and will notice that it is the trail's only historical lift bridge open to motor vehicle traffic. Also along Lock 21, look out for an old dry dock used to repair canal boats, and on the southern side, a campground for equestrian users. •



Centennial Park

Near the tip of the trail's northern segment in Rock Falls, visitors will find the beautifully maintained Centennial Park. Named in honor of Rock Falls' 100th Anniversary, the 50-acre park connects trail users to a host of recreational facilities—from ball fields to picnic areas, an ice skating rink and more—under the care of the Coloma Township Park District. Young explorers will enjoy Storybook Village, a uniquely designed children's playground, and people can fish, kayak, canoe or take a paddleboat ride at Centennial Park Lagoon. Those interested in the region's history can take a tour of the Little Red Schoolhouse and Museum—or check out a restored railroad caboose, part of the former Rock Island line. •



Birthplace of Ronald Reagan

Located less than 2 miles from the trail in Tampico, Illinois, is the Graham Building—also known as the birthplace of the 40th president of the United States, Ronald Reagan. Reagan was born in the upstairs apartment in 1911. Next door to the apartment, which has been restored and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1982, visitors will find a gift shop and museum of Reagan memorabilia. Nearby on Glassburn Street is Ronald Reagan Park, located across the street from another of Reagan's childhood homes. Reagan is also said to have frequented the canal and learned to swim in its feeder system! •





Maine

Eastern Trail: Showcasing Some of the Best of Coastal New England

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CINDY BARKS

As I dipped my toes into the chilly surf of the Atlantic Ocean, I had to marvel at the spectacular diversity along the Eastern Trail (eastertrail.org) that runs through the coastal region of southern Maine.

During my several spring days of meandering along the 29-mile stretch from South Portland to Kennebunk, I stared down a raccoon in the deep pine woods in Kennebunk, watched lobster boats comb the blue waters of Portland's Casco Bay and was awed by a flock of graceful snowy egrets wading in the saltwater ponds of the Scarborough Marsh.

And that's not even mentioning my day at Old Orchard Beach, beachcombing along a 7-mile strand of wide, sandy oceanfront complete with a quaint pier, amusement park and multiple places to buy fried dough and pizza slices.

Not only was the beach a lovely bonus after my days of walking and bicycling on the trail, but it brought me full circle, ending at a tourist

attraction central to the Eastern Trail's early history.

Trains and Trolleys

By the mid-1800s, tourism was well under way in coastal Maine. The Eastern Railroad dates back to 1842, when the Portland, Saco and Portsmouth Railroad line opened as the first railway between Portland and Boston.

A few decades later, the Portland Electric Railroad Company connected a trolley line to the railroad route to give tourists arriving in Portland direct access to the "Grand Beach at Old Orchard."

Although increasing automobile use brought an end to the rail line in 1945, efforts were under way a half-century later to use a portion of the disused right-of-way as a recreational/nonmotorized transportation trail. The Eastern Trail Alliance (ETA) was born in 1998, and the first section of the Eastern Trail opened at Scarborough Marsh in 2004.

The ETA's vision for a 65-mile off-road trail is about 30 percent

complete, which means that the route combines off-road sections with well-marked on-road sections. Trail completion will get a major boost in the next year or so, when two new bridges will be built, closing a gap and making for a continuous 16-mile off-road stretch between South Portland and Saco.

Today the Eastern Trail already boasts many jewels. Carole Brush, executive director of the Eastern Trail Management District, told me that Old Orchard Beach "is southern Maine's go-to spot in the summer."

Lighthouses and Lobster

Another of the trail's most popular destinations is the 5.5-mile greenbelt that begins on the trail's north-eastern end at Bug Light Park and the Bug Light (Portland Breakwater) lighthouse in South Portland.

With its expansive view of the Portland Harbor and its 1875-era lighthouse, Bug Light Park was the perfect place for me to start my exploration of the trail. As I admired

PHOTO: Old buoys decorate a section of the Eastern Trail/ South Portland Greenbelt in Maine.

The Eastern Trail is part of the 3,000-mile East Coast Greenway (greenway.org) biking and walking route that extends from Maine to Florida.

251,978

No. of trail visitors from July 2017 through June 2018

the lighthouse's Corinthian-column design, I noticed locals arriving by car or on bikes, greeting one another and setting out to walk their dogs along the park's pathways.

Mark MacIsaac, who visits the park daily with his dog Phoebe, told me the park and its trail are a beloved community amenity. "South Portland has done an incredible job," he said. "We take great pride in the parks, and certainly in this trail."

That community pride was apparent as I proceeded southwest past the park's informative Liberty Ship Memorial, which commemorates Maine's massive World War II shipbuilding efforts, and along the wide, paved greenway that traverses neighborhoods and hugs the harbor's edge.

Framed by the distant Portland skyline, the sea tides were putting on a show as I walked by, ebbing to reveal the harbor's sandy bottom and beautiful channels.

South Portland's booming restaurant and brewery scene was also on display. Nearing downtown, I made a quick coffee stop at Verbena, a creative breakfast and sandwich/bowl eatery on Ocean Street, just blocks from the trail. Later I took another short detour to Cape Whoopies for a sample of Maine's official state treat—the decadent, irresistible whoopie pie.

An even larger array of restaurants and breweries is just across the Casco Bay Bridge in downtown Portland. In the popular Old Port, lobster is king—and countless restaurants and bars feature Maine's most famous food. I joined locals on my first evening in Portland at perennial favorite J's Oyster for a twist on scampi—featuring lobster, of course!

The downtown Portland spots are all within easy reach of the Eastern Trail and other attractions on foot



or bicycle. One morning I joined a bike tour organized by Portland's Summer Feet Cycling and rode from the Eastern Trail to three scenic lighthouses: Portland Breakwater, Spring Point Ledge and Portland Head. (During the summer, the bike tour includes the twin lighthouses at Two Lights State Park as well.)

Off-Road and On-Road Mix

Moving on from South Portland, I visited the Scarborough Marsh, Maine's largest saltwater marsh, where I walked for a couple of miles with Carole Brush and Nancy Borg, ETA executive director.

I quickly learned that, similar to South Portland, the nearby Scarborough and Saco communities are big boosters of the trail. The day I visited, the trail was busy with runners, bicyclists and families with small children. "It's flat, so it's for everyone," Borg said.

Patrick O'Reilly, who with his wife, Sue, owns the Scarborough pub O'Reilly's Cure, said he became involved with the trail years ago at the urging of his friend John Andrews. Andrews, who died in 2017, is credited with founding and mentoring the Eastern Trail. For the past three years, O'Reilly's Cure has sponsored the John Andrews Memorial Eastern Trail 5K, a trail fundraiser.

O'Reilly sees the trail as an economic boon for local businesses, and a place to experience the region's unique natural landscape. "It is fantastic that within five or 10 minutes from anywhere in town, you can be on that trail, and in a different world," he said.

Farther along, the terrain transitions abruptly from marsh to woodlands. As the trail passes through the quaint towns of Biddeford, Arundel and Kennebunk, white pine trees tower overhead. Even though I knew that houses, schools and roads were nearby, this section of trail felt like deep wilderness.

Brush said the trail's changing landscape and diverse uses are among its major assets. "Each year over 250,000 people enjoy this amazing resource for transportation, exercise, 'forest bathing,' bird watching and many, many other activities," she said, quoting from the trail's mission statement.

After spending several days exploring the route's northern half, I couldn't help but agree: For my first taste of Maine, the Eastern Trail was the perfect showcase. •

PHOTOS: (Top) Cyclists on a tour with Summer Feet Cycling of Portland on the 5.6-mile South Portland Greenbelt, which coincides with the Eastern Trail. (Middle) South Portland's Bug Light (Breakwater Lighthouse) at the trail's northern terminus. (Bottom) Arundel resident Greg Raine and his son's dog Zoey on the trail in the Kennebunk area.

"It is fantastic that within five or 10 minutes from anywhere in town, you can be on that trail, and in a different world."

Patrick O'Reilly, Owner, O'Reilly's Cure Pub, Scarborough, Maine



Accessing the Trail

Bug Light Park (rtc.li/portland-bug-light) at the northern end of the trail is a convenient access spot. It offers plenty of parking, as well as views of the picturesque Portland Breakwater Lighthouse. From the Portland International Jetport, take Jetport Boulevard to Congress Street and then turn right on Fore River Parkway. Continue onto Commercial Street and exit onto Highway 77 South/Casco Bay Bridge. Continue onto Broadway to Madison Street.

What to See

One of the Portland area’s foremost attractions is the Portland Head Light (portlandheadlight.com)—the iconic lighthouse perched on the edge of a beautiful and rocky cliff. Old Orchard Beach (oldorchardbeachmaine.com) is a 30-minute drive from downtown Portland, and just a couple of blocks off the Eastern Trail. Just down the trail is Scarborough Marsh (rtc.li/scarborough-marsh), Maine’s largest saltwater marsh.

Where to Stay

For a newspaper-themed stay in downtown Portland, check out the Press Hotel (thepresshotel.com), the luxuriously renovated former offices of the *Portland Press Herald*. The Holiday Inn by the Bay (innbythebay.com) offers rooms at a reasonable rate with sweeping views of downtown Portland and Casco Bay. Campers can be within a mile or so of the trail at Bayley’s Camping Resort (bayleysresort.com) in Scarborough; it has a variety of accommodation choices.

Breweries

Portland, a city of about 65,000, boasts an estimated 18 breweries, which puts it at the top of lists of communities with the most breweries per capita. Among the best are Allagash Brewing Company (allagash.com), Fore River Brewing (foreriverbrewing.com) and Shipyard Brewing Company (shipyard.com).

Where to Eat

For brunch or dinner right along the Eastern Trail in Scarborough, O’Reilly’s Cure (oreillyscure.com) offers classic New England chowder and crab cakes in an Irish pub setting. In nearby Portland, visitors need remember just one word—lobster. Enjoy authentic lobster rolls, along with other seafood choices, at Bite into Maine (biteintomaine.com), The High Roller Lobster Co. (highrollerlobster.com) or J’s Oyster (jsoysterportland.com). For a Maine breakfast said to be favored by lobstermen, head to the local favorite, Becky’s Diner.

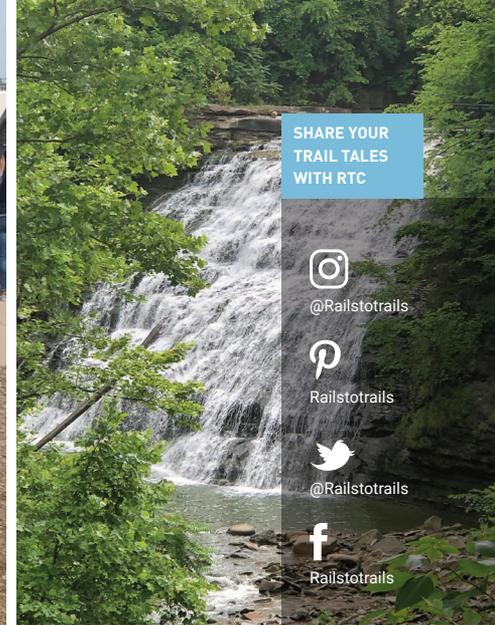
Where to Rent

Portland EnCYCLEpedia (portlandmainebikerental.com) offers a range of bike rentals, and Summer Feet Cycling (summerfeet.net) leads informative bike tours. Fun and Sun Rentals (funandsunrentals.com) in Scarborough provides bikes, kayaks and stand-up paddleboards. Maine Audubon (maineaudubon.org) has a kayak and canoe rental site on the Scarborough Marsh, just steps from the Eastern Trail. •

VIEW A PHOTO
ESSAY OF THE
EASTERN TRAIL
IN THE 2019
GREEN ISSUE OF
RAILS TO TRAILS
MAGAZINE: [RTC.LI/
EASTERN-TRAIL](http://rtc.li/eastern-trail).



Cindy Barks is a freelance writer/photographer and Arizona newspaper reporter who has covered trails extensively in her community and in the Southwestern United States. She also writes a travel and hiking blog at nearandfaraz.com.



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Ohio

Buckeye Biker Explores Ohio by Trail

BY LAURA STARK

Not many people have bicycled across a state, but Doug Edwards has pedaled the width of Ohio *twice* along the expansive Ohio to Erie Trail (ohioerietrail.org). An avid bicyclist, Edwards also aims to ride all of the multiuse trails in the Buckeye State, which currently number more than 150 on TrailLink.com. The semi-retired educator is well on his way to accomplishing his goal, having pedaled on just over 100 of them. He documents his travels on TrailLink with photos and reviews under the handle “Orange-Doug,” after Cleveland’s Orange City School District where he taught for 24 years.

“When I grew up, my father was also an educator, so when Dad finished the school year, we would pile into the station wagon or the camper, and we’d be gone for six weeks traveling the country,” reminisced Edwards about his adventurous spirit. “The wanderlust that I have was planted and nurtured by those experiences.”

Edwards’ passion for the outdoors began with hiking, especially in Cuyahoga Valley National Park, only 15 miles from his home. But with a desire to

explore farther and reach even more places each day, he began thinking about bicycling. His wife gave him a bicycle for Christmas in 2012, and that sealed the deal. In 2013 he made his first long-distance journey on the Ohio to Erie Trail, a nearly complete 326-mile route across the state (and part of the developing 3,700-mile Great American Rail-Trail).

Just a few years later, his new trail mission coalesced during an advocacy day organized by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s (RTC’s) Midwest Regional Office in Ohio; he traveled to Columbus with the group to speak to legislators about the need for more trail funding in the state.

“Reflecting upon that day, one of the things I thought about was that I knew about the Ohio to Erie Trail, but I didn’t know a lot about other trails in Ohio,” said Edwards. “So that sparked my interest in finding out about those other trails and started me on this quest to get all these trails completed.”

Although most of the time he rides solo, Edwards enjoys occasionally traveling with friends he met on RTC’s West Virginia Sojourn in 2016. The group has biked in Wash-

ington, D.C.; Louisville, Kentucky; and Indianapolis. Future trips include visiting the Dayton and Xenia areas to ride some of the trails in Ohio’s Miami Valley Trails system, and in the fall, they’re planning to head up to Ann Arbor, Michigan.

“There are seven of us—from all different parts of the country—and we’re able to get together once or twice a year,” said Edwards. “We go to each other’s cities, and one of us hosts the others, and we ride the highlights of the local trails.”

Closer to home, Edwards looks forward to riding the Ohio to Erie Trail again to experience new connections as more of its gaps are closed. With grandson number two just born in the fall, he’s excited to share his love of trails with the next generation.

“Imagine saying to your grandchild, ‘You can ride across the state of Ohio,’” enthused Edwards. “Kids can ride a bike at 7 or 8 years old, so give them an adventure, give them something that’s bigger than themselves, because if you encourage a kid to do something like that and they do it, then all of a sudden they think they can do anything! That’s how I view it: Dream big.”

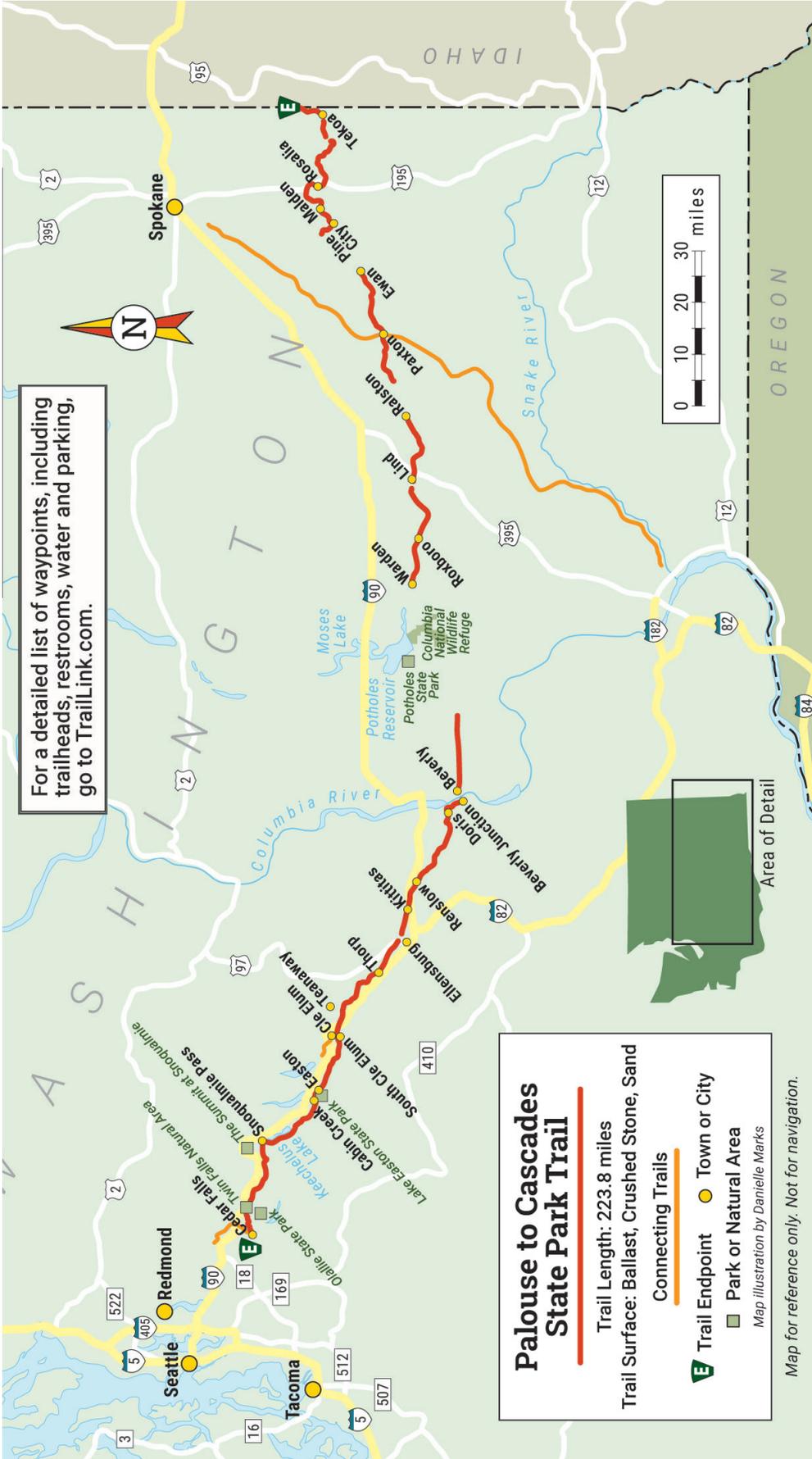


“Imagine saying to your grandchild, ‘You can ride across the state of Ohio.’ Give them an adventure, give them something that’s bigger than themselves.”

Doug Edwards, who goes by “OrangeDoug” on TrailLink.com



Laura Stark is a lead writer and editor for Rails to Trails magazine.



For a detailed list of waypoints, including trailheads, restrooms, water and parking, go to TrailLink.com.

Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail
 Trail Length: 223.8 miles
 Trail Surface: Ballast, Crushed Stone, Sand

Connecting Trails

E Trail Endpoint ● Town or City
 ■ Park or Natural Area

Map illustration by Danielle Marks

Map for reference only. Not for navigation.

Washington State's Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail

Spanning more than 200 miles across Washington State, the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail is one of the longest rail-trail conversions in the United States. Its eastern end begins at the Idaho border, about an hour south of Spokane, and from there the trail traverses the rugged and pristine countryside as it makes its way to the Columbia River. West of the river, travelers will find dense forests, bridges with sweeping vistas and passage through a century-old

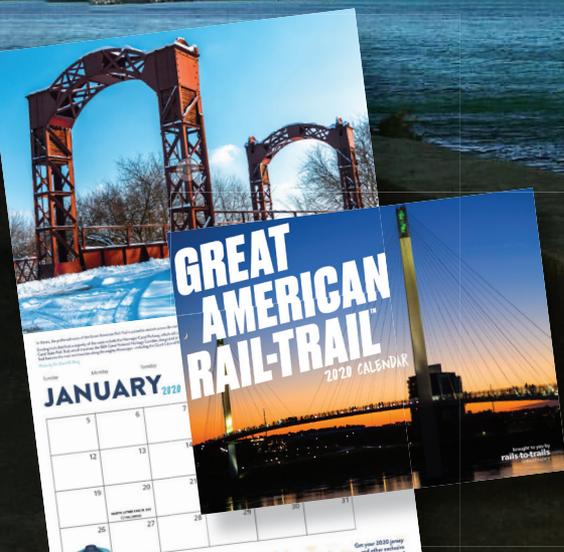
tunnel at Snoqualmie Pass on a journey to trail's end in the Cascade foothills, just 35 miles from downtown Seattle. Stretching 285 miles when complete, the trail is a host of the developing Great American Rail-Trail connecting Washington, D.C., and Washington State. **For more information, go to palousetocascadestrail.org. Read about the trail in the cover story of this issue on p. 8.**



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