

Newcastle Trails Turns Fifteen

This year is the 20th anniversary of Newcastle, a small city that ranks high in livability, and the 15th anniversary of Newcastle Trails (NT), a 501(c)3 non-profit citizens group that has worked for parks, trails and open space, in close cooperation with the City, since 1999. I'm writing to celebrate Newcastle's amazing and still-growing trail system, and to encourage you to explore it and enjoy it. Browse NT's web site; download our latest map and trail guide; join NT by emailing info@newcastletrails.org (for trail news, no dues); attend our October 6 board meeting (7PM at Regency Newcastle); and consider volunteering for the board, for trail work, computer work (GIS, Web, writing), lobbying, fund-raising - whatever you'd like to do.

Newcastle's trails are part of a regional network used by walkers, joggers, cyclists, and equestrians. And Newcastle lies within a Grand Loop, a triangle of trail corridors with its base on the existing Lake Washington Trail (future Eastside Rail Trail) and its apex in Cougar Mountain. The sides of the triangle are the May Creek Greenway (mostly in Newcastle) and the Coal Creek section of the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway (mostly in Bellevue). The triangle is crossed north-to-south by Coal Creek Parkway (continuous sidewalks) and the heavily used Waterline Trail (few sidewalks, many trees), with downtown Newcastle and Lake Boren Park sandwiched between them. You can walk the Loop and its cross-trails now, with two exceptions: Renton's May Creek Trail (partly complete, bridge needed), and the Parkway underpass for the Coal Creek Trail (due soon). The Grand Loop is mostly wooded nature trails: the May Creek and Coal Creek trails include creeks, waterfalls, bridges, historic sites, and sections of an old railroad; the Terrace Trail has switchbacks, lovely rock steps, views, fallen trees, and giant moss-covered boulders; the Marshall's Hill and Red Town trails (in Cougar Mountain Park) link wilderness trails with the remains of Old Newcastle and its coal mines.

The west-to-east CrossTown Trail is Newcastle's major urban trail (nature trails and sidewalks), a central connector linking schools, parks, neighborhoods, and north-south trails. It starts near 116th and Newcastle Way, and winds past or through Hazelwood School, Hazelwood Park, Donegal Park, the historic Newcastle Cemetery, and Lake Boren Park, continuing on sidewalks to Beit Tikvah, and - after a gap - southeast along the DeLeo Wall (woods, views) from Newcastle Vista to Cougar Mountain.

Fall projects include new trail signs citywide, and changes to the CrossTown Trail: re-routing it at the new Middle School and the planned RSD Newcastle development (between Olympus and Hazelwood); rebuilding sections of trail between Newcastle Vista and Cougar Mountain.

Newcastle's trail system has benefited from the cooperation of many groups, including Renton, Bellevue, King County, and the Issaquah Alps Trails Club (check their web sites for trail maps and guided walks). Volunteers were essential. Much of the trail work was done by Boy Scouts (and parents) from Newcastle's Hazelwood Troop, and other troops from Newcastle, Bellevue, Kirkland and Renton.