

About the Foothills Trail

The Foothills Trail is a "rail trail" which is the conversion of an abandoned railroad right of way into a public nonmotorized path, and trail. The route is intended for the exclusive use by pedestrians, bicycles, and horseback riding. Other similar allowable uses include inline and roller skates, children's strollers, and skateboards. Motorized wheelchairs, emergency aid cars, and maintenance vehicles are not restricted on the trail. Pierce County purchased and constructed the first 15 miles of trail using local dollars along with a variety of funding partners. Pierce County has used Transportation Enhancements funds made available through the federal Surface Transportation Act(s). State funding has been received through the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC). Pierce County has obtained funding through the Pierce County Conservation Futures account. Substantial private funds have been generated by the Foothills Rails-To-Trails Coalition, a private nonprofit organization committed to the development of the Foothills Trail. Many private individual contributors have donated trail benches and rest stop furniture. By using all of the partners and resources available, Pierce County has been able to develop the first 15 miles of the Foothills Trail.

What's Next for the Foothills Trail

The completed 15 miles of trail is a little more than half of the overall Foothills Trail plan. Very soon (2006/2007) the Trail is expected to connect South Prairie into Buckley. The Town of Buckley already has a 1.5 mile asphalt trail and is working with Pierce County, King County, and the City of Enumclaw to cross the White River to connect to the King County portion of the Foothills Trail. Two more trail sections are still in the design stage, and will connect Cascade Junction (located just east of South Prairie) to the towns of Wilkeson and Carbonado. These two trail pieces are scheduled for construction in 2007-2008. Also, going north and west from the East Puyallup trail head, Pierce County and the City of Puyallup plan to connect the Foothills Trail with the Puyallup River Walk Trail. That project is anticipated in 2006.

Be a Part of the Trail

The Foothills Trail can always use volunteer assistance. Through Pierce County, our Adopt-A-Trail program allows organized groups to select a portion of trail and the responsibility of grooming their portion. Since the Trail has very little litter, most of the trail grooming includes cutting back the invasive vines and foliage, sweeping the trail where it intersects with roads or driveways, and helping clean up an occasional blown-down tree or debris following a windy day. Groups or individuals may donate trail furniture such as benches, bike racks, or picnic tables. For more information on the Adopt-A-Trail program, please contact Pierce County Parks and Recreation at (253)798-4176. The Foothills Rails-To-Trails Coalition is a partner with Pierce County in the development and improvements to the Foothills Trail. Tax deductible donations made to the Rails-To-Trails Coalition are gratefully accepted. The Coalition has a variety of fund raising efforts which include a booth at the Western Washington Fair, a "Buy a Tree" for the trail, and many other projects designed to help make improvements along the Trail. For more information, call the Foothills Rails-To-Trails Coalition at (253)841-2570.

Railroad History

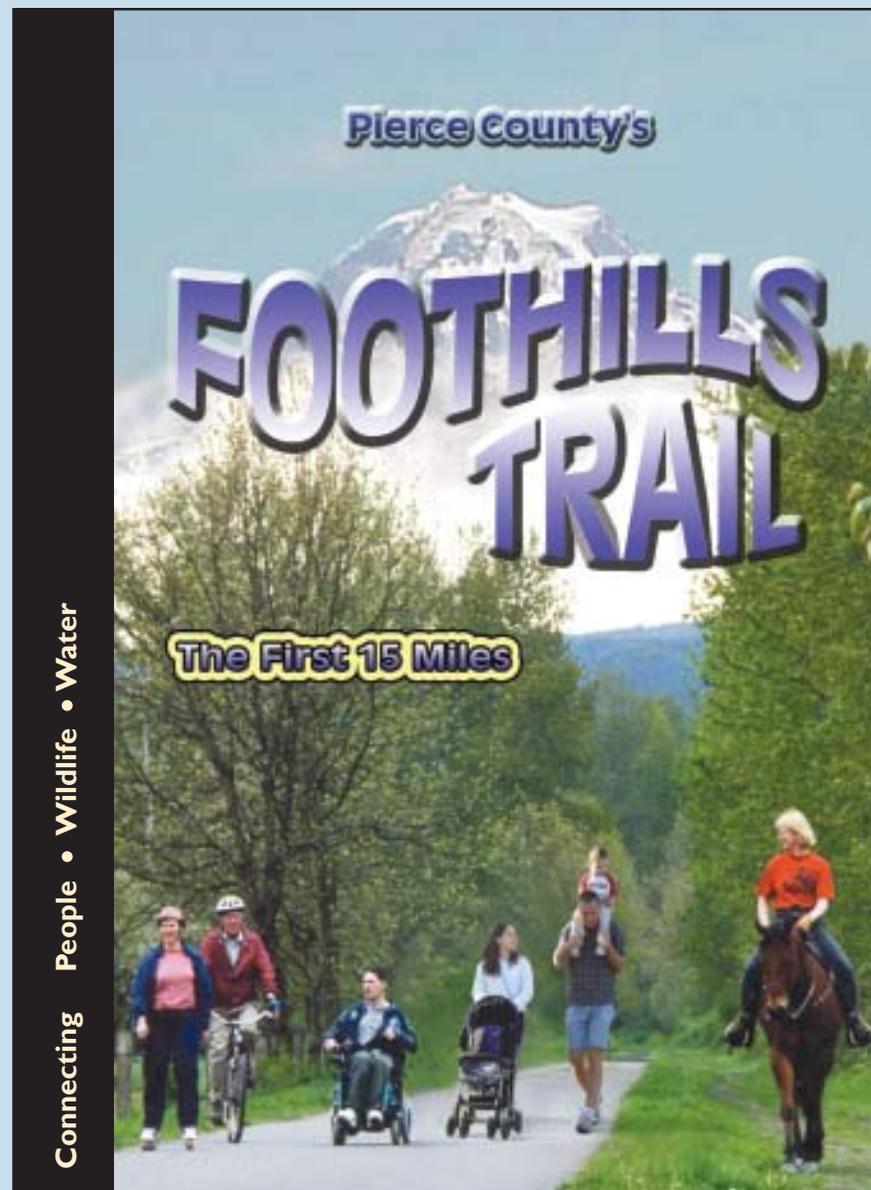
In 1864, the United States Congress gave the Northern Pacific Railroad Company sufficient land to construct a railroad between Ellensburg and Tacoma. However, it wasn't until 1873 that Northern Pacific brought rail service to Tacoma from Portland. About a year later, the Northern Pacific began construction of the railroad line from Tacoma to Wilkeson to take advantage of the newly discovered coal resources in the Cascade foothills. In 1883, Northern Pacific was forced to complete its line from the midwest to Tacoma or forfeit millions of acres of land grants. The trail section from Cascade Junction east of South Prairie through Enumclaw and the Stampede Pass tunnel was completed in July 1887. The Burlington Northern Railroad Company succeeded the Northern Pacific Railroad Company in managing the railroad line. The railroad's use of the line declined, and in 1983 the portion between Buckley and Cascade Junction was dismantled, including three high trestles which will be replaced. By late 1986, the balance of the railroad line had been removed for salvage.

Pierce County saw the wonderful opportunity to create the trail and worked with the salvage company to preserve the remaining trestles along the line. Unfortunately, many of the adjacent property owners filed a series of lawsuits against Pierce County and the Burlington Northern Railroad Company, successfully claiming the former railroad land for themselves. However in October of 1990 the Pierce County Council passed Ordinance #90-6, establishing the Foothills Trail as a public linear park. Pierce County soon began property negotiations to acquire a 40-foot corridor along the centerline to make the Trail a reality. All but a few properties have been purchased. Negotiations with the adjacent property owners continue today, and Pierce County is already in the midst of preparing final construction plans in anticipation of completed land purchases.

Trail Rules and Regulations

The Foothills Trail is a Pierce County park. Please help us keep it clean and observe the rules while you enjoy your visit.

1. Helmets are required for bicycle riders and recommended for skaters or scooter riders.
2. Motorized vehicles are prohibited on the Trail with the exception of service vehicles, emergency equipment, and motorized wheelchairs.
3. Please obey the 10 mile per hour speed limit.
4. Horses should remain on the designated equestrian path whenever possible.
5. Pets must be on leash, owners are required to remove pet's waste.
6. Park only in designated trail heads and parking areas.
7. No overnight stay.
8. No jumping from bridges and trestles.
9. Possession of alcoholic beverages prohibited.
10. No fire arms, fire works, or open fires.
11. The Park/Trail opens one half hour before sunrise and closes one half hour after sunset.



Connecting People • Wildlife • Water



(253)798-4176

"Thousands of miles of abandoned rail lines should become hiking, biking, and bridle paths."

*President Reagan's
Commission on Americans Outdoors
December, 30 1986*

The Foothills Trail - First 15 Miles

Connecting People ~ Wildlife ~ Water



Logo courtesy of Washington State Parks Commission

Meeker to McMillin

Rail With Trail

This 4.2 mile section connects the community of McMillin to the east edge of Puyallup and Sumner and is unique from the other sections in that an active railroad operates near the trail -- thus the term *Rail With Trail*. The short line railroad company is called the Meeker Southern Railroad. Trains operate along side this section of trail at low speeds, providing rail service to their customers. The Trail crosses the railroad track in four locations. **Use extra care when crossing the track!** This section also passes through and along some large produce farms and commercial Christmas tree forests. Throughout the year you can observe the farming cycle of spring planting through a variety of harvest seasons. Trailheads with parking, information signs, and restrooms are located at both ends of this trail section.



McMillin to Orting

The Urban Trail

You will enjoy this 2.3 mile section which connects downtown Orting to McMillin and runs parallel to SR 162 for most of its length. This section opened in 1998, just as Orting was expanding its growth boundaries to the north. Just a few years ago, the countryside was a combination of berry fields, hop barns, and dairy farms but now includes the High Cedars Golf Course and Ptarmigan Ridge Elementary School, along with several new residential developments. Restrooms, sufficient parking, an information kiosk, and a children's play area are available at the City Park in Orting. While in town you can visit picturesque shops or dining at a variety of small town restaurants.



Orting to South Prairie

Rivers and Bridges

At almost 7 miles in length, this diverse length of trail is the longest section of the Foothills route. It includes a cattle farm, a buffalo ranch, the Carbon River, three different creeks, bridges, and railroad trestles that cross the waterways. The Carbon River originates at the Carbon Glacier on Mt. Rainier. Fishermen flock to the Carbon during the annual salmon migrations. South Prairie Creek is described as Pierce County's most productive salmon spawning creek. Never opened for fishing, South Prairie Creek has heavy Chum, Chinook, Silver and Steelhead salmon runs in the Spring and the Fall. The trail also crosses Voights Creek and Roush Creek, both of which are salmon-bearing streams. There are eight bridges on this section, four of which are former railroad trestles converted for trail use. Along the Trail, three rest stops have been provided through private gifts. The REI Rest Stop is located at a 3 1/2 acre wetland mitigation site. The trail presently terminates in the town of South Prairie. The trailhead there has restrooms, information signs, and ample parking.



East Puyallup Trailhead



McMillin Trailhead



Orting City Park Trail Kiosk



South Prairie Trailhead



REI Rest Stop
Wetland Mitigation Site

| Legend | | | |
|---|-----------|---|-----------|
|  | Trail |  | Rivers |
|  | Trailhead |  | City/Town |
|  | Rest Stop | | |