

# Big news from Applegate Trails Association

BY DIANA COOGLE

Even before the trails are in place, Luke Ruediger and Josh Weber, board members of the Applegate Trails Association, have completed a thru-hike on the ridge from Ashland to Grants Pass. They are the first two people (at least in common memory) to walk this route with its rugged terrain, cross-country challenges, and endless expanse of folds and ravines, hillocks, and outcrops.

**In mid-May** the two intrepid hikers started in downtown Ashland, hiking on the route that will be the Jack-Ash Trail (envisioned and proposed by the Siskiyou Uplands Trail Association), then onto the East ART (the eastern end of the Applegate Ridge Trail, envisioned and proposed by the Applegate Trails Association), ending 80 miles from the starting point at the Cathedral Hills trail system at the south end of Grants Pass.

The hike itself was reason enough to undertake this journey—the views, the wildness, the excitement of finding a trail—but the trip especially appealed to Josh because, he says, he wanted “to imagine the hypothetical: what it is like to have to walk from one town to the next, as though a first explorer, traversing the remote ridgelines to see how the various towns and side valleys connect.”

There were also two less hypothetical purposes. One was to scout the route in preparation for the eventual trail-building. The other was to create a promotional video to help bring awareness to ATA’s trail-building project. “We believed that seeing the beauty and diversity of the trail would help the surrounding communities



Lunch at ATA’s 2015 Call of the Wild. Clockwise from bottom left: David McClarnon, Alex Weinbrecht, unknown, Barbara Kostal, Josh Weber, Mike Kohn.

understand the tangible benefits these trails represent,” Luke explained. “The film will bring people to the trail and encourage folks to get involved.”

**Videographer Tim Lewis** met Josh and Luke at several intervals on their journey to get footage of their experience and shots of the amazing scenery this long trail provides: beautiful forests, woodlands, and chaparral; long, spectacular views across the mountains, and diverse floral displays.

**ATA extends many thanks** to all the people who donated to the Kickstarter campaign to raise money for the video. We’re excited about Tim’s work and how well it documents what we’re intending to do.

With the excitement of the hike now behind us, ATA is turning its attention to the next two big events: our second Call of the Wild outdoor seminar at Cantrall Buckley Park on Saturday, October 1. Keep your eyes open for posters and flyers announcing who will be leading workshops, and keep your calendars marked for the date. All attendees last year loved the event, so we’re hoping to make it even bigger this year.

**The other big event**, scheduled for early fall, is the breaking of ground for the East ART, the first section of the Applegate Ridge Trail to be built. Enormous excitement at ATA!

See our hike schedule at [www.applegatetrails.org](http://www.applegatetrails.org). Join us on the trail!

Diana Coogle  
dicoog@gmail.com

## The Jack-Ash heads for the hills

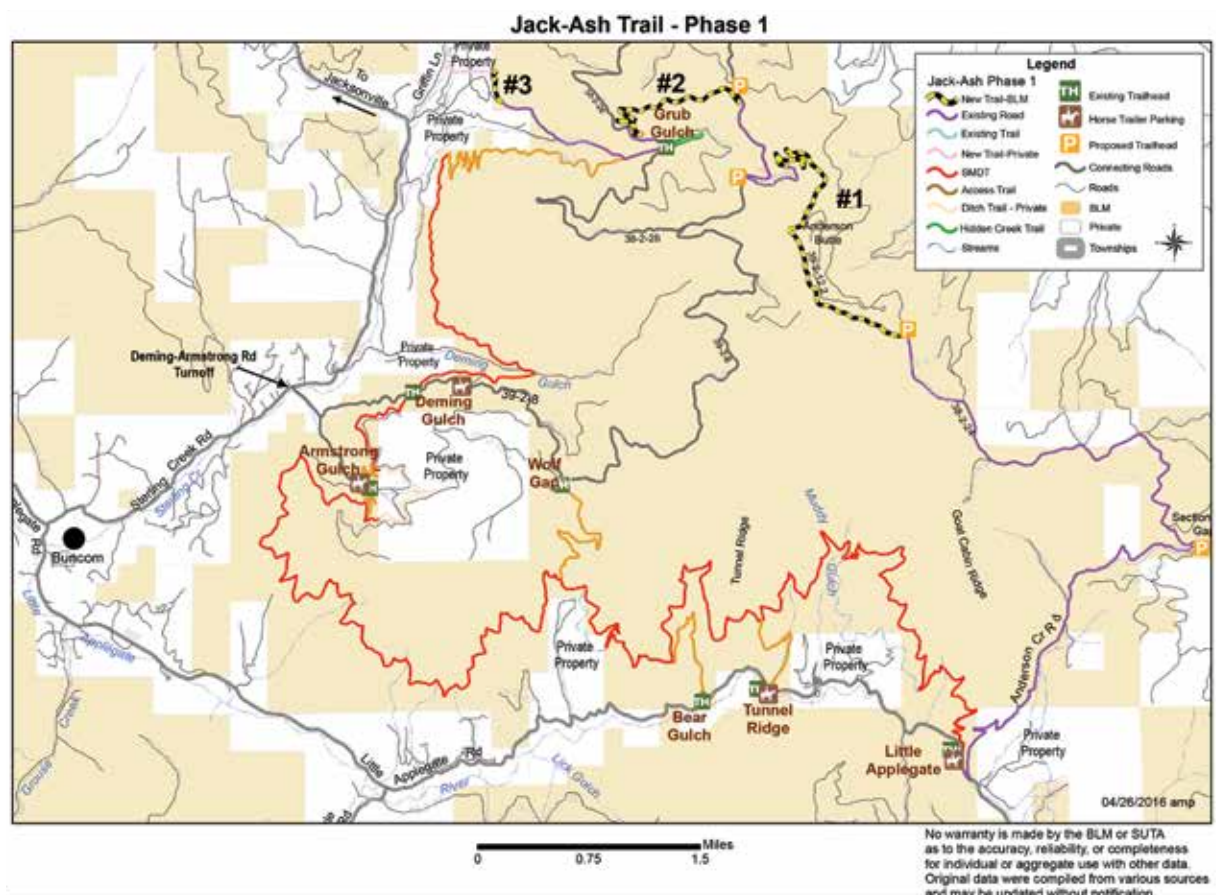
BY JEFFREY JUDKINS

After several years of planning, marking the proposed route, obtaining easements for private land access, and working through the detailed environmental reviews required for a new trail, the first phase of the Jack-Ash Trail is finally becoming a reality.

Volunteers from the Siskiyou Uplands Trail Association (SUTA) have worked closely with the Medford Bureau of Land Management (BLM) office to fulfill the vision of a nonmotorized path linking the trail systems of Jacksonville and Ashland (hence the name “Jack-Ash”). When completed, hikers, equestrians, runners, and mountain bikers will be able to travel more than 60 miles of trails. The Jack-Ash crosses the ridges and slopes of the mountains lined up on the west side of the Rogue Valley between Wagner Butte and Jacksonville, including Bald Mountain, Point Mountain, and Anderson Butte. Much of the route will track the historic trail between the fire lookouts on Anderson and Wagner Buttes. The Jack-Ash will also connect to both ends of the historic Sterling Mine Ditch Trail, creating a giant loop in the middle. Eventually it will also connect to the future Applegate Ridge Trail, which will continue the ridgetop journey toward Grants Pass.

**The first phase** of the Jack-Ash project (see map) involves the

construction of 4.7 miles of new trails, linking existing BLM roads and historic trails to create a 36-mile loop with the very popular Sterling Mine Ditch Trail (another SUTA project). The proposed new trail segments are located on the upper slopes of Anderson Butte, running down the slopes toward the existing Sterling Mine Ditch trailhead at Grub Gulch. It splits off from the Grub Gulch access trail and starts the trip toward Jacksonville by connecting out to Griffin Lane. At the other end, the trail will leave the ridgeline and follow scenic Rush Creek Road to connect to the Sterling Mine Ditch Trail at the Little Applegate Trailhead. Access to the Jack-Ash Trail will be possible where the trail connects to existing gravel roads, with future improvements to several new parking areas, including Section-line Gap. Trail work for the first phase is planned to begin this fall.



**The second phase** of the project will extend the trail on the northern and southern ends to eventually connect with the Ashland Watershed trail system and enable connection to the Pacific

Crest Trail via Forest Road 22 to the Jacksonville Woodlands trail system and the Applegate Ridge Trail.

Jeffrey Judkins  
drjjudkins@gmail.com

## ATA’s first-ever equestrian event

Saturday, June 4, is National Trails Day, and what better way to spend it than on the back of a horse! The Applegate Trails Association (ATA) is hosting its first-ever trail ride on the beautiful East Fork-Four Creeks trails in Williams, Oregon.

Four Creeks Trail weaves through forested Bureau of Land Management land with mild to moderate inclines, some rocky places (shoes or hoof boots suggested), and four creek crossings. The trail often parallels Powell Creek, and there is a lovely section lined with beautiful green ferns, giving the ride an almost ethereal feeling. This is a ride of moderate difficulty.

Gather at the trailhead by 9 am for departure at 9:30 am sharp. Remember to bring water and a snack. The ride should be finished between noon and 1 pm.

Applegate resident Alex Weinbrecht, leader of this ride, is an experienced trail guide. Her trail horse Dakota is solid and knows her job! Alex joined ATA to help ensure that all trails being developed are suitable for equestrian use. To RSVP and get directions to the Four Creeks trailhead, please contact Alex at [alex@applegatetrails.org](mailto:alex@applegatetrails.org).



ATA trail-ride leader Alex Weinbrecht

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