

ATA receives grant for new trailhead

BY DIANA COOGLE

The Applegate Trails Association's (ATA's) new trail, the East ART (East Applegate Ridge Trail) has already proven popular with hikers, who record enthusiastic responses. One blogger (The News-Review at nrtoday.com) said the East ART deserves a rating of 15 on a 1-to-10 scale, and adds, "A tip of the hat to the Applegate Trails Association for having both the vision and the acumen to bring this trail to actual fruition."

The tipped hat also goes to Travel Oregon, which has recently awarded ATA a grant to construct a second trailhead (there's already one off Sterling Creek Road), on Highway 238, between Forest Creek and Longnecker roads outside Jacksonville. Travel Oregon's awards of grants for a number of trail-related projects throughout the state show how impressed they are with the potential of economic impacts from nonmotorized trails. ATA is proud to be a part of that potential in the Applegate.

Hikers, we reminded the grant-awarding committee on our application, are usually outdoor enthusiasts who, whether local residents or visitors, will no doubt patronize the outdoor stores in the area, shopping for cool-weather jackets, water bottles, day packs, and other



Kiosk on the East ART trailhead off Sterling Creek Road. (Photo: Mike Kohn.)

hiking paraphernalia. Specifically in the Applegate, the Honeysuckle Café, in Ruch, so close to the trailhead, will surely see an increase in business from hungry hikers ready for lunch. Because the Honeysuckle Café buys local produce, bread, and wine, this economic benefit will be passed along

to other businesses. Trail users might buy energy bars or sandwich fixings at the Ruch Country Store and a bottle of wine at Fiasco or Valley View winery for their picnic. They might have coffee at the Pit Stop or breakfast at Cafe Ruch before setting off on the trail.

And that's just in Ruch. Visitors might combine a hike featuring beautiful scenery (i.e., the East ART) with a tour of the Applegate's excellent wineries. They might opt to take lodging in the Applegate so they could get up early and have a sunrise hike on the East ART. Hikers and mountain bikers might very well come off the trail and go straight to a local massage therapist—Haley May, at May Massage Arts, or Kyleen Brodie, at Elements Massage Therapy, both in Jacksonville, for instance—for relief for sore muscles.

The new trailhead will allow an easy shuttle, between Highway 238 and Sterling

Creek Road. Its visibility will encourage people to use the trail and, consequently, to patronize Applegate businesses. We at ATA are pleased to be a part of this economic development in the valley, proud that nonmotorized recreation is recognized for its economic, as well as its health and spiritual, benefits. We plan to begin construction on the trailhead this winter.

Keep your eyes open for the Highway 238 trailhead, and get out there and hike the trail! (*Hint:* The East Art hike is best if you make the Highway 238 trailhead the destination and start your hike from Sterling Creek.)

When you get off the trail, stop for a glass of wine or a cup of coffee in the Applegate. Or a massage.

Diana Coogle
Board Member

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Applegate Trails Association Trail Maintenance Work Parties

Sunday, December 3, 2017
Sunday, February 11, 2018
Sunday, March 11, 2018



Help us maintain the *new* and stunning East Applegate Ridge Trail. You will meet new friends, develop camaraderie, get some exercise, help your community, and discover this incredibly beautiful trail. We meet at 8:30 am and quit in time to eat lunch at the trailhead at 1:30 pm.

The east trailhead is located at the end of BLM road 38-2-29.1. Coming from Jacksonville, turn right off Sterling Creek Road 150 yards past the 4-mile marker and proceed to the trailhead. Directional signs will be posted. ATA provides tools, snacks, and lunch. There is a variety of tasks for all skill levels.

An RSVP to david@applegatetrails.org is always appreciated, but not required. Just show up.

Thanks to all volunteers and supporters!

After wildfire come wildflowers: A boon for pollinators

BY SUZIE SAVOIE

People who hiked the Boundary Trail through the Red Buttes at the headwaters of the Applegate River after the 1987 wildfires reported massive floral displays on the Siskiyou Crest within the burned area. After the 2012 Fort Complex Fire, which also burned in the Red Buttes, I saw for myself the same thing: more wildflowers than anyone had seen in decades—and happy pollinators, too.

The diversity and color of wildflowers responding to the Fort Complex Fire was truly staggering. Before the fire, much of the area was covered in dense stands of montane chaparral. The Fort Complex Fire burned in a natural mosaic of high-severity fire in the montane chaparral, burning off large patches and encouraging a lush growth of wildflowers where the chaparral had once been. The wildflowers benefitted from the wildfire.

After the Fort Complex Fire, wildflowers were blooming at the base of burned-off woody shrubs, responding to the lack of shrubby competition. Typically, before the fire, bluehead gilia (*Gilia capitata*) was seen only in the occasional rocky bald, but after the fire it carpeted the Boundary Trail in a spectacular display. Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja spp.*) and Oregon sunshine (*Eriophyllum lanatum*) bloomed in abundance—some areas were so thick with blooming Oregon sunshine that you could see the golden-yellow hue from miles away. Parish's nightshade (*Solanum*

parshii) also appeared more abundantly. This species is strongly fire-adapted and often associated with chaparral habitat. Considered relatively rare in Oregon, this species is more abundant in California. Chinese houses (*Collinsia spp.*) were found in dense masses on thin, rocky soils throughout the fire-affected area; however, it was phacelia (*Phacelia spp.*) that stole the show. Where stands of montane chaparral were consumed by high-severity fire, the area was transformed into flower fields dominated by phacelia.

Over the next couple of years, we are likely to see the same amazing wildflower response within the fire-affected areas of this year's Miller Complex Fire, which burned throughout the headwaters of the Applegate River as well as in the Red Buttes Wilderness. The majority of the Miller Complex Fire in the Applegate watershed burned at low to moderate severity, but some places, such as Azalea Lake in the Red Buttes Wilderness, did sustain some high-severity fire effects in the fire-adapted lodgepole pine forest. The trail into Azalea Lake will surely be a carpet of wildflowers within a couple of years, and it will be a boon for our native pollinators, creating colorful pollinator habitat out of the ashes.

Wildfires are a natural and necessary part of the ecosystem in the Siskiyou Mountains. Because the flora is fire-adapted—having evolved with natural lightning-caused wildfire and indigenous



An abundance of wildflower species growing along the Boundary Trail in the Red Buttes following the 2012 Goff Fire, part of the Fort Complex Fire.

burning over millennia—many species of wildflowers respond positively to wildfires and often produce larger plants and more abundant flowers.

Wildfires can rejuvenate the landscape. Many plant species need the heat of fire to reproduce or their populations will dwindle. For example, knobcone pinecones can remain closed for 80 to 100 years without fire, and rare Baker's cypress seeds are also released from their cones from the heat of wildfire.

Intense heat can break down seed coats and clear away competing vegetation, allowing wildflower seeds to germinate and the plants to thrive and grow. Recent studies have shown that chemicals from charred wood in the soil following wildfire also stimulate seed germination and plant growth. The seeds of many wildflower species can lie dormant in the soil for decades and then germinate by the millions following wildfire. The plants may have

been there long ago, but the area has since turned into chaparral or forest; after a fire the seeds finally have the right opportunity to germinate.

Wildfires enhance the world-class biodiversity in the Siskiyou Mountains. The massive floral displays following wildfires are not only beautiful but are also bountiful feasts for hungry pollinators reliant on nectar and pollen from wildflowers for food. Wildfires can increase the available food for native bees, butterflies, moths, hummingbirds, and other pollinators.

I look forward to continuing my exploration of the fire-affected areas in the Miller Complex Fire over the next couple of years. The flowers are going to be bee-eautiful!

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