

BEAR RIDGE COMMUNITY FOREST UPDATE

Spring, 2023

Indian Creek Reservoir, Drone Photo by Ben Hayes, Springboard Forestry

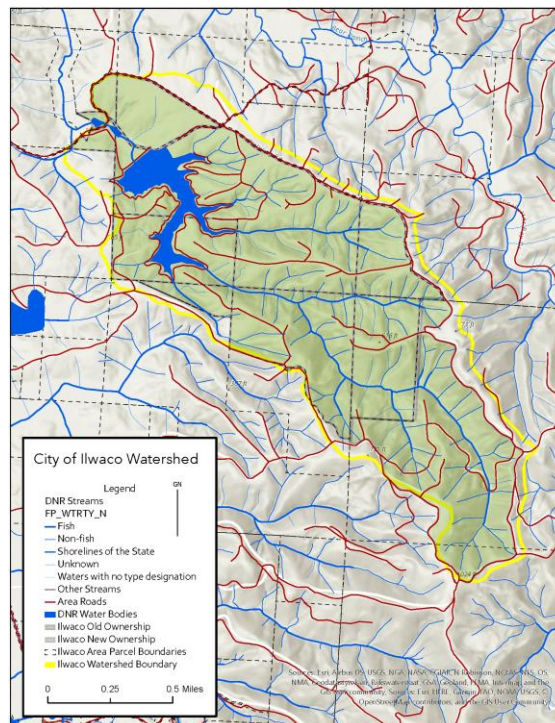
A VITAL SUCCESS

After a 6-year long effort to secure funding, the City of Ilwaco was able to complete the purchase of 378 acres of timberland within its source watershed. Grant funding was provided by various Federal and State agencies including the US Department of Agriculture's Forest Services, WA Dept. of Ecology, and both State and Federal legislative appropriations totaling over \$4 million dollars. Securing these funds and completing this complex transaction would not have been possible without a critical partnership with the [Trust for Public Land](#) and support from [Weyerhaeuser](#).

This major acquisition puts the City of Ilwaco in direct control of its natural resources and ensures the protection and stability of its municipal water source for generations to come.

RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The 875-acre Bear Ridge Community Forest now surrounds and protects the Indian Creek Reservoir which provides 100% of the City's municipal water and serves as a critical reserve for neighboring communities.



The 875-acre Bear Ridge Community Forest

Along with the conservation of its natural resources, the City of Ilwaco sees tremendous opportunity in enhancing and developing recreational opportunities in the Bear Ridge Community Forest. The City is currently working on plans for sustainable and intentional public access to the property and establishing a destination mountain bike + multi-use trail system. Enhancing recreational opportunities in the area will increase tourism and create economic opportunities in the City of Ilwaco and the surrounding community.

DESIGNING A MULTI-USE TRAILS SYSTEM

Completing the purchase of the timberland without reliance on financing has left the City of Ilwaco in a strong financial position to immediately start strategic planning work for the property, including the completion of a forest management plan and a trail design plan.

On February 27th, the Ilwaco's City Council voted to approve a contract with the International Mountain Bicycling Association's (IMBA) Trail Solutions division to begin conceptualizing and designing a mountain biking and hiking trail system



Councilmember Matt Lessnau giving a property tour of recently acquired timber in the Bear Ridge Community Forest – Luke Whittaker, Chinook Observer

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within the Bear Ridge Community Forest. This initial design phase includes site assessment, stakeholder and community engagement, a formal trails concept, and a public access plan for the property.

Community Engagement, A Critical Design Step

Public outreach, such as community and stakeholder meetings, are necessary to gather input and feedback to drive the final trail concept plan. Early and informative public engagement is critical to ensuring that the City of Ilwaco develops a trail system that will meet the needs of our diverse community as well as attract new recreators to the area. A public engagement event will be held sometime in the coming summer months.

TANGIBLE ECONOMIC BENEFITS

According to the Outdoor Industry Alliance, mountain bicyclists represent approximately 3.4% of the U.S. population (10.6 million people). Further research done by IMBA state that enthusiasts, representing a portion of that total population, are willing to travel extensively within a four-hour range to experience well-designed and constructed trail systems. These “destination visitors” typically spend \$193 per day in local communities, representing lodging and meal purchases according to IMBA¹. The US Forest Service data produces similar figures, where recreators that take “local overnight trips” typically spend \$213 per day² in communities near federal land with robust recreational opportunities, including multi-use trail systems. Many rural towns around the country have invested in trail development to revitalize their struggling economies, none more so than Oakridge, OR. where mountain bikers spend an estimated \$2.4 to \$4.9 million in each year³, accounting for five percent of the local economy.

Creating a high-quality trails system within the Bear Ridge Community Forest will be a strong economic driver for the City of Ilwaco, providing tourism revenue for local businesses and lodging tax revenue for Ilwaco and neighboring communities.

Local Businesses Offer Support in Anticipation of Increased Traffic

Snow Peak, a global outdoor gear and experience company, is creating their first US Campfield in nearby Long Beach, WA. Their Chief Futures Officer, Matt Liddle, is supportive of adding a trail system to the Bear Ridge Community Forest and the recreators it will draw.

“...we see potential for our campground to be a home base for the future trail users.” – Matt Liddle, Snow Peak

Snow Peak is now looking to enhance their original plans for the Long Beach property to cater to mountain bikers by offering tailored amenities such as secure bike storage and bike washing stations.

Julian Orr and Laila Brown, owners of SALT Hotel + Pub in Ilwaco are also excited about the project and have offered to host the community engagement event this summer – keep an eye on the City’s website for more information

¹ Elliottsville – Seven Ponds Sanctuary Trails Concept Plan, IMBA, December 2022

² Federal Outdoor Recreation Trends: Effects on Economic Opportunities, October 2014

³ Adapting To the New Economy: The Impacts of Mountain Bike Tourism in Oakridge, Oregon