

Jacksonville Woodlands Association

P.O. Box 1210
Jacksonville, OR 97530

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Cooperation Restores Zigler Trail

One of the oldest trails in the Jacksonville Woodlands, the Sarah Zigler Trail, should be a more enjoyable hike now that it has received some much-needed restoration. Over the past few years it had become extremely muddy and slippery during the winter months. The City of Jacksonville and the Jacksonville Woodlands Association (JWA) recently partnered to come to the rescue. Exposed pipe was removed, drainage slopes were created, trail sections were widened, erosion control is in place and the entire trail has been spread with decomposed granite.

Getting the trail ready for granite spreading was a long, tedious process taken care of by Jacksonville’s remarkable public works employees. Then, the final day and a half of wheelbarrowing and raking decomposed granite was accomplished by an amazing and eclectic group of JWA board members, Jacksonville Boosters, Jacksonville Public Works and Jackson County Community Justice team. It was hard work that was balanced by laughter, pride of success and new friendships made possible by the organization and energy of Jacksonville’s Operations Manager, Tony Thompson. We invite you to get out for a walk on Sarah Zigler’s newly improved trail.



The JWA Board would like to thank the JWA partners: City of Jacksonville, Bureau of Land Management and the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy, whose active support and ongoing contributions play a vital role in the Jacksonville Woodlands success. And, thank you to the JWA supporters and Jacksonville community for the generous financial contributions which provide the resources to sustain the Jacksonville Woodlands and the Forest Park.

The Woodlands

Preserving the Natural & Cultural History of Jacksonville, Oregon

Newsletter of the Jacksonville Woodlands Association

Fall 2022

Reducing the Risks

We love our Woodlands trails, our green sanctuary, with trailheads right in the city. But events over the past several years have also shown us the risks of being surrounded by forest. Such risks are not new. Fortunately we now know ways to reduce those risks, while still allowing us the enjoyment of strolling through the woods.



The Woodlands area known as The Grove was the first to see a fire hazard reduction project.

In 1910, a fire in Eastern Washington and Western Montana burned over 3 million acres, razing homes and entire communities, and killed 87 people, most of whom were firefighters. Shortly thereafter, the Forest Service was tasked with controlling all wildfires across 193 million acres, nearly eliminating a natural component of our ecosystems – fire. Natural lightning fires, along with Native Americans that used to set fire to meadows and open grasslands, hoping to rejuvenate forage for deer, antelope, and bison, and at the same time, kept fuels reduced. Livestock grazing, to a certain degree, did the same thing.

In an effort to prevent large catastrophic fires from occurring again, the Forest Service created lookout towers, and manned them with personnel to inform fire crews of lightning strikes and the resulting wildfires. These crews were very successful at stopping most fires, but in the process, they unknowingly created a situation we’re dealing with today – acres and acres of forests that previously were thinned by fire but, now are dense and overstocked, ready to explode. (continued on page 3)

Message from the JWA President

During the year that has passed since the 2021 JWA Newsletter, the list of accomplished tasks has been impressive. The Board of Directors has been able to meet regularly once again, and the past practice of an Annual Action Plan has been reinstated. On the list for several years was the repair and improvements to the Sarah Zigler Trail. This trail is the most widely used trail in the Woodlands and wet weather conditions had made it unstable. Trail users should now find the Zigler to be much more enjoyable.

In addition, a Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Jacksonville and the Jacksonville Woodlands Association (JWA) brings Jacksonville’s Forest Park under the care and management of both. With the City, JWA and the Forest Park Volunteers working together, sharing costs and responsibilities, the Park can be even better managed. In addition, a positive result is that donations to Forest Park are now tax deductible.

An ongoing priority for JWA is forest management. We are continuing to plan for fuel reduction in the Woodlands with timing and funding as key issues. Reducing fire intensity and keeping fire away from our homes and forests is of utmost importance.

In closing, I want to encourage local residents and visitors to get out and enjoy the beautiful trails and Woodlands so near to our special small town.

Kandee McClain, JWA President

JWA and City Join to Care for Forest Park

Sitting across the highway and a mile to the west from JWA's Twin Bridges parking area is Jacksonville's oldest newest park. Comprising over a thousand acres, Forest Park incorporates much of the upper reaches of the Jackson Creek Watershed. With the recent Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Jacksonville and the Jacksonville Woodlands Association for the ongoing responsibility of care for this mostly wild area, Forest Park is now Oregon's 3rd largest municipal park.

The history of the park is one of reclamation and restoration. The city owns a lot of land in the watershed. It had been heavily impacted by logging and mining, unauthorized trash dumping, unregulated off-road motorsports, and other contrary usage for decades. The citizens of Jacksonville decided a park would be a better use, and a way to control the illegal and unmitigated sedimentation of Jackson Creek. The Motorcycle Riders Association (MRA) came on board, agreed to a land swap to create a contiguous park, and spearheaded an extensive clean-up of the area. Additional work was done to re-forest and rehabilitate damaged areas and considerable wildfire prevention measures were undertaken.

Now, through the on-going efforts of city staff and volunteers, the park boasts over 40 miles of trail. About 30 miles of trail are open to shared use of mountain bikers and hikers, though in the steep canyons, these trails are often narrow and technical. About 10 miles are designated mountain bike only to avoid user conflict on some steep grades. Hikers have access to another dozen or so miles of hiker only trails, again to provide for safe hiking in some of the park's more sensitive areas.

Between donations from citizens, some well-written grants, and partnerships with the Boosters and JWA, the park has been able to provide infrastructure to enhance visitors' appreciation: bridges, shelters, signage and kiosks, and a vault toilet that has replaced the easily vandalized porta-potties.



Forest Park volunteer Clayton Gillette enjoys the view from the Volkswagen Falls bench.



The Cascade Crest shelter offers shade on a sunny day and a view.

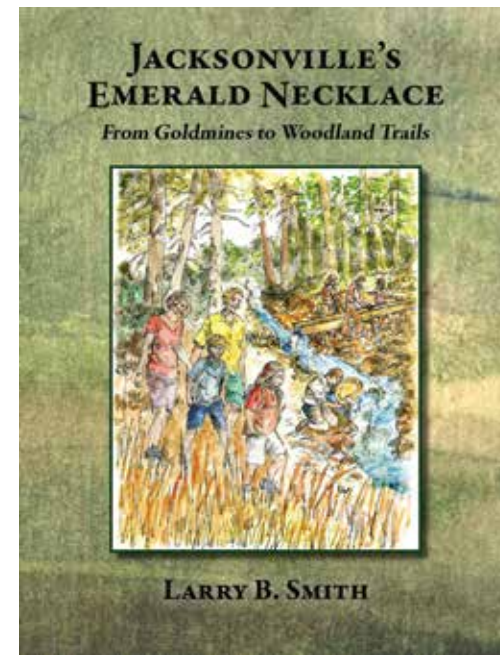
Parking areas are scattered along the two main park arteries. Over 50 benches provide trail side resting spots, as well as some expansive views of the surrounding area.

Hikers can visit two mine tunnels and appreciate many interpretive panels. While many streams lose surface water in the summer, there are at least three areas where water flows year-round. Multiple ecosystems abound on the hillsides and in the canyons; the park rises from less than 2000' to almost 3500', allowing for multiple climate zones. One must visit year-round to see the changes. Spring and early summer provide a massive wildflower show, while autumn brings the opportunity to wade through miles of golden big-leaf maple leaves. And of course, the wildlife is what you'd expect- shy, but present. If it lives in Southern Oregon, you just may see it in the park.

Woodlands' History Preserved by Founder Larry Smith

The story of how Jacksonville came to be almost surrounded by undeveloped land that evolved into a popular hiking trail system is being told in a soon-to-be published book, "Jacksonville's Emerald Necklace." It's a years-long labor of love by founding JWA board member Larry Smith.

Over the course of 36 chapters Smith traces the ownership of each section from the glory days of the 1850s gold rush up to the point the property passed into public ownership. Included are the stories of Smith's elementary school students involvement in raising money, writing letters, building trails, planting trees and even buying an 1898 gold mine. Several chapters are devoted to the efforts of a coalition that includes the BLM, National Park Service, legislators, the city, and the many citizen supporters. It also includes 408 photographs.



Stay tuned for publication dates and how and where to purchase the book, or to make a donation to offset the costs. Meanwhile, Smith is available to community groups to give his PowerPoint program on the Woodlands' history. Contact him at twinhiker@gmail.com or 541-899-7402.

Reducing the Risks *(continued from page 1)*

Living in close proximity to forests means wildfire is a very real threat to our property, and life. Southwest Oregon agencies and residents have long recognized the need to reduce fuels by thinning brush and trees to improve the health of their forest lands, as well as make them more fire resilient. Unfortunately, all of these actions cost money, time, and effort.

The West-Bear All-Lands Restoration Project (WBARP) is providing financial and technical assistance to landowners within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) on the west side of the Bear Creek valley, spanning from the Talent foothills to Jacksonville.

A short time ago, Fire Chief Wayne Painter secured a grant to fund fire hazard reduction in Jacksonville. The seven acre parcel known as The Grove was selected as the first site to work on. Brush, small trees, and other burnable debris were reduced from this parcel to create a landscape through which a wildfire would burn at lower intensity, and would be easier to extinguish, causing less harm.

As soon as funds are secured, Lomakatsi Restoration Project will administer the systematic reduction of fuels surrounding the remainder of Jacksonville primarily through thinning, pruning, prescribed burns, and chipping, including private lands where permission is granted. To learn more, please see <https://mysouthernoregonwoodlands.org/west-bear/>.

Meet the Newest Board Members



Michael Snearly moved to Jacksonville in 2017. He is a retired San Jose State University faculty member, introducing students to the natural world. He and his wife

Leslee enjoy the Woodlands Trails almost daily.



Daniel Schilberg came to Southern Oregon in 1989. He has served on several non-profit boards and councils, including a Rural Fire Protection District.

He worked in electronics, contracting, and business.

In his spare time he enjoys an eclectic array of hobbies and since moving to Jacksonville has joined many community service organizations.