Sunday
PENINSULA
Daily News
November 1, 2020
$2
Newspaper for Port Angeles, Sequim and the West End
Sound Publishing, Inc.

Soon to be open

Spruce Railroad trail refurbished

Ribbon-cutting anticipates public access

By Michael Carman
Peninsula Daily News

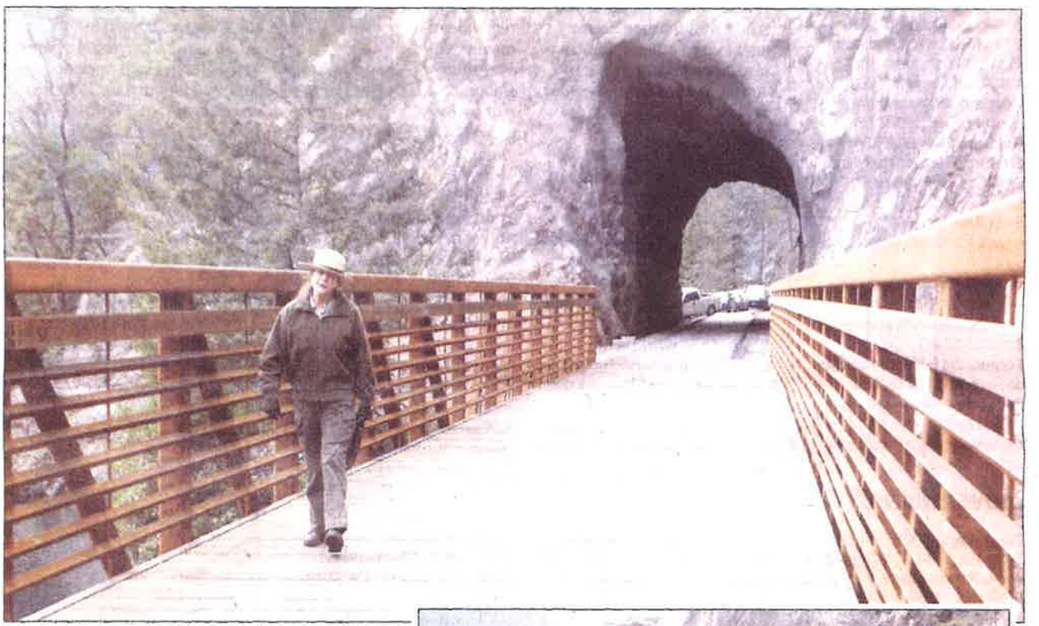
OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK — The smell of fresh asphalt lingered in the air and fish nibbled along the surface of Lake Crescent as representatives from Olympic National Park, Clallam County, the state Recreation and Conservation Office and the Peninsula Trails Coalition spoke at a small, socially-distanced ribbon cutting ceremony for the Spruce Railroad Trail.

Thursday afternoon's ceremony does not open the trail to the public yet.

Thursday afternoon's ceremony does not open the trail to the public yet. Work continues on the nearly-completed renovated pathway, which is expected to be open for use sometime after the middle of November, according to Penny Wagner, Olympic National Park spokesperson.

Some paving and other construction-related activities are yet to be completed and some sections are not yet safe for public use, she said.

Turn to Trail/A3



Photos by Keith Thorpe / Peninsula Daily News

Above: Olympic National Park Superintendent Sarah Creachbaum walks across a new bridge on the Spruce Railroad Trail abutting the recently renovated Daley-Rankin Tunnel at the start of a ceremony to celebrate the soon-to-be-open trail on the north shore of Lake Crescent.
Right: Lisa Turecek, facilities manager for Olympic National Park, and Rich James, former Clallam County Transportation Program Manager, wield ceremonial scissors to cut a ribbon dedicating a reworked and refurbished Spruce Railroad Trail on the north shore of Lake Crescent.

Trail: Spruce Railroad

Continued from A1

The result of public participation, private enterprise and governmental cooperation at the county, state and federal levels, Thursday's ceremony celebrated the final phase of a multi-year project to revamp and improve accessibility along the former Spruce Railroad grade by creating a paved, multi-purpose trail to be shared by hikers, cyclists, equestrians and those traveling in wheelchairs.

The trail near Lake Crescent follows the historic railroad grade of the Spruce Railroad, which was completed in November of 1918 and abandoned in 1951.

With the newly restored Daley Rankin Tunnel serving as the backdrop for the ceremony, ONP Superintendent Sarah Creachbaum discussed getting an earful from former Clallam County Commissioner Mike Doherty on one of her first days on the job in Port Angeles, nearly eight years to the day Thursday.

"In walks Rich James, [former Clallam County Transportation Program Manager] the engineer, and Commissioner Doherty. And Commissioner Doherty was not happy with me," Creachbaum said.

"And anybody who knows Commissioner Doherty knows that is not a good place to be, to have Mike be unhappy with you.

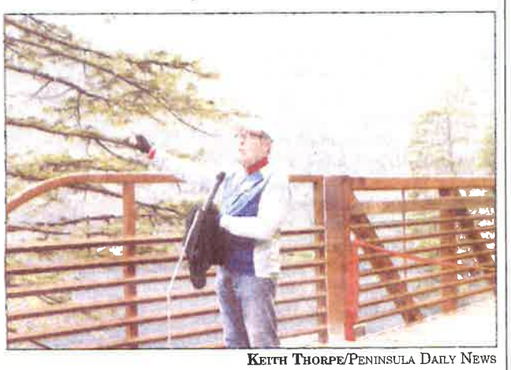
"They were unhappy because there hadn't been enough movement on getting some contracting done for what they described to me as the Spruce Railroad Trail," she said.

"Fast-forward eight years and to be able to stand here and see the finished project and celebrate it with all of our partners is an extraordinary experience for me."

Creachbaum joked that park superintendents "don't do anything."

"We kind of lay the groundwork so things can happen, but we don't actually go out and do it. The doer in this case is our engineer, Lisa Turecek, the person with the Park Service who really represents this project," Creachbaum said.

"She has tirelessly promoted it and ensured that it would always continue. She and I have been aligned on this goal since she first came to the park. It is our shared vision, so that is pretty darn exciting."



Keith Thorpe/Peninsula Daily News

Jeff Bohman, president of the Peninsula Trails Coalition, speaks during Thursday's dedication ceremony for the new-renovated Daley-Rankin Tunnel and Spruce Railroad Trail.

Clallam County Commissioner Bill Peach directed thanks toward all involved on the project while speaking for past and present colleagues.

"I stand on the shoulders of commissioners like Mike Doherty that really, really advocated for this project, as well as the staff," Peach said.

"On behalf of Commissioner Mark Ozias, Commissioner Randy Johnson and myself, we sincerely say thank you to everybody that worked very hard on this, the list is extremely long."

Peach also drew laughs when he commented on the gorgeous setting for the event.

"It's beautiful today, and if you aren't experiencing something that is wonderful, I'm not sure there's much hope for you," Peach said. "It's wonderful to be out here. I'd like to recognize Mayor [Tim] Fletcher from Forks. The trail is headed your way, sir. And it's because of all the hard work of the folks that are here. And to all of you, thank you."

James outlined the origins of the Spruce Railroad Trail project dating back to 2008 and expressed gratitude that Creachbaum quickly recognized what the trail could become for the park and county.

"The main thing she did early on was she accepted the county's vision, and by county I mean all the people in the county had a vision of what this trail could be and how it could be a transportation corridor that would go from one end to the other, the Olympic Discovery Trail," James said.

When opened to the public, the Spruce Railroad Trail will become part of the 134-mile Olympic Discovery Trail, which when complete, will stretch the width of the North Olympic Peninsula from Port Townsend to La Push.

James also praised the park's Deputy Superintendent, Lee Taylor and Turecek for their contributions in securing grant funding.

"I think the first year we scored No. 1 in the state [with the Recreation and Conservation Office] was the year [Taylor] came with us. It was so impressive to have a deputy superintendent there, that committee had never seen that kind of support.

"And Lisa is a grant-funding wizard ... Almost half of the match money that came for this project came from her efforts."

James also said he appreciated the support from past and current county commissioners.

"It takes a lot of political willpower to do something like this over that span of time," James said.

James described the rare use of county road funds to boost a trail project and thanked thousands of trail volunteers and supporters who wrote letters, attending public meetings and put in sweat equity working on the trail itself.

Sports reporter Michael Carman can be contacted at 360-406-0674 or mcarman@peninsuladailynews.com.

More plans in store for Olympic Discovery Trail

By Michael Carman
Peninsula Daily News

OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK — Steve Gray, Clallam County Transportation Program manager, and Jeff Bohman, Peninsula Trails Coalition president, discussed the future of the Olympic Discovery Trail during the Spruce Railroad Trail dedication.

When complete and open to the public, the Spruce Railroad Trail will become a segment along the proposed 134-mile Olympic Discovery Trail, which will span the North Olympic Peninsula from south of Port Townsend to La Push.

Gray said Thursday at the dedication that about 60-percent of the Olympic Discovery Trail was complete.

"Our partnership with Olympic National Park won't stop with this," Gray said. "The county completed and paved this spring, a 1.6-mile segment from Gossett Road to Waterline Road, which is just before connecting to the Spruce Railroad Trail.

"Our next goal is to take the Waterline Road connector, the logging road which connects from state Highway 112 all the way to East Beach Road, and get that paved, widened and improved," Gray added.

Work also remains to connect the trail from Sappho to Forks and La Push.

Gray said $5 million in funding from the Federal Lands Access Program has been awarded to the county for much of the work from the U.S. Highway 101/state Highway 110 intersection out to La Push while a section from Forks' Calawah River Park to the 101/110 intersection also has received a $450,000 contribution from the Lloyd J. Allen Charitable Trust. The latter also appears likely to earn $300,000 in state Recreation and Conservation Office funding.

Bohman, who previously worked for the National Park Service, applauded the agency for its forward-thinking approach to the project.

"It's not an easy thing for a preeminent conservation organization like the National Park Service to find its way clear to work out the upgrade of a railroad, single-track trail into this multi-modal, handicap-accessible and safe route to get pedestrian and bicycle travel off of Highway 101," Bohman said.

"We've been cheerleading all along the way and we will continue to do so."

Bohman also indirectly pointed out the economic benefits of trail construction, including the North Olympic Marathon and a number of other events that utilize the trail, bringing visitors and their wallets to the Peninsula.

"Steve mentioned the piece out from Forks to La Push was ranked No. 1 [for funding by the state Recreation and Conservation Office], a piece of trail we are working on south of Port Townsend to Discovery Bay was ranked fifth and another segment, a link to the trail, part of the corridor between Olympic National Park's Visitor Center and the Olympic Discovery Trail corridor, came in seventh," Bohman said.

"Three ODT-related projects, ranked first, fifth and seventh, out of 29 projects. We know there is incredible — Peninsula-wide and beyond — momentum to get this done. Great things are coming to Forks and La Push. We are going to be there and are looking forward to a long relationship with the park to care for this incredible trail."

Sports reporter Michael Carman can be contacted at 360-406-0674 or mcarman@peninsuladailynews.com.

Briefly . . .

Big library read slated for Peninsula

PORT ANGELES — The North Olympic Library System invites patrons to join the Big Library Read's discussion of "Reverie" by Ryan La Sala.

The novel explores what happens when the secret worlds people hide within themselves come to light.

The book is available for download by library cardholders at anytime.overdrive.com through Nov. 16.

Readers may join the online discussion about the book at discuss.biglibraryread.com through Nov. 23.

Clallam County residents can apply for a library card online at www.nols.org.

Peninsula Daily News

Speed blamed for Old Olympic Highway wreck

Peninsula Daily News

PORT ANGELES — A 58-year-old Port Angeles woman was treated and discharged from Olympic Medical Center after a two-vehicle collision on Old Olympic Highway between Port Angeles and Agnew.

Lisa K. Aubrey, 58, was treated and discharged from OMC in Port Angeles after the wreck at a little after 11 a.m. Friday.

The driver of the other vehicle, Ethan A. Lyon, 46, of Sequim was not injured, said the State Patrol, which cited him for driving too fast.

The State Patrol provided this report:

Aubrey was driving a Kia south on Old Olympic Highway and had stopped her vehicle at a stop sign at U.S. Highway 101, preparing to make a right turn.

Lyon, coming up from behind, failed to stop his Toyota pickup in time and struck Aubrey's car.

Aubrey's car was towed from the scene, while Lyon's could be driven away.

Both drivers were wearing seat belts, according to the State Patrol, which determined that drugs or alcohol were not involved.

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GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE

LORNA SMITH

Currently serving Jefferson County on:

- Conservation Futures Committee (8 years)
- Planning Commission (7 years)
- Shoreline Management Task Force (recently appointed)
- Snohomish County Land-Use and Environmental Manager, overseeing public works, permitting and affordable housing projects (25 years)

HER OPPONENT

- 1 year of a 4-year term on the Jefferson County Planning Commission 20 years ago